



AUGUST 2024

40th
Anniversary

Featuring: WD Richter · Earl Mac Rauch · Jeffrey Morgan · Michael Wm Kaluta

WORLD WATCH ONE



W. Kaluta

WORLD WATCH ONE

PDX Edition · August 2024* · Portland, Oregon

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Front Cover

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Back Cover

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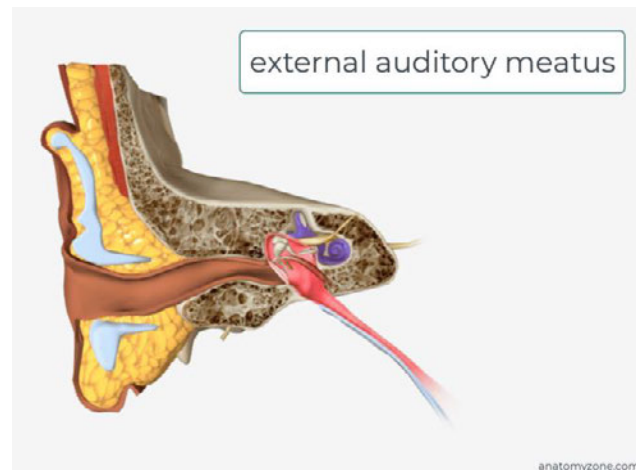
UNKNOWN FACTS · Pinky Carruthers
various places throughout the issue

**The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men Gang aft agley*

Forty Years of Buckaroo Banzai (and Twenty Years of World Watch One) Memories

By Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson

I worked in Southern California during the summer of ‘84 and saw ***The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*** on its opening weekend at the Egyptian Theater in Hollywood. I think a group of medical students was in the audience because they enjoyed the surgical scene more than was warranted and laughed uproariously at the line, “Any untruth triggers a brutal charge to your auditory meatus”.



anatomyzone.com

A few weeks later, I found myself in Anaheim, where the 42nd World Science Fiction Convention was held. I bought a day pass and entered without an agenda. Somehow, the swirling ebb and flow of sci-fi fans on the con floor brought me face-to-face with **20th Century Fox** publicist, Terry

Erdmann. Terry had fistfuls of Hachimakis, just like the one Buckaroo wore in the movie. “I saw ***Buckaroo Banzai*** and loved it!”, I gushed. “Wanna headband? Just put your contact info on this sheet”, Terry said as he moved on to the next fan. That headband hung in a place of honor in my studio for many years. Later, I had it made into a scrub cap during COVID.

Several months passed and I started receiving copies of the original version of *World Watch One* in the mail. (So, that’s why Terry wanted contact info.) At this point, I thought ***Buckaroo Banzai*** was a hit and it was only a matter of time before we got ***Against the World Crime League***. With your 20/20 hindsight, you may snigger at my naiveté, but this was before the internet. We weren’t bombarded with all that “disappointing opening weekend gross” nonsense. All I knew was that my nerd friends and I thought the movie was special. **Fox** must have also thought so, or they wouldn’t have published those awesome official newsletters. They contained interesting behind-the-scenes info about the making of the movie, but even cooler, the newsletters included new info about the fictional world of Buckaroo Banzai. Nuggets such as, “Rawhide is alive!” were like Jerry Lewis and gave me hope to go on. It wasn’t until much later that I learned that while Hollywood,

Catnip, Clyde Von Drake, Sharky, and the Silver Fox had permission to create and distribute the newsletters, they had very little actual support. This group of resolute Blue Blaze Irregulars lived the Banzai Institute's motto, "Progress over protocol" and I honor them for it.

About five years later, I was left in the lurch when the newsletters stopped coming. While this was disappointing, 1990 turned out to be my personal best Buckaroo Banzai year. During the summer, I met a young woman out dancing. I was able to coax a phone number from her, and a week later, we went on our first official date. We were doing the usual getting-to-know-each-other chit-chat when I asked, "What's your favorite movie?"

Buckaroo Banzai, she answered. Human relationships are complex beasts, and I don't want to imply that a similar taste in movies is the key to happiness. I will say that we've been married for over thirty years and have two children. We've traveled to all seven continents, gone swimming in the Arctic and Antarctic Oceans, climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, and gone SCUBA diving at the Great Barrier Reef. This woman not only talked the talk. She walked the walk. Her BBI nickname is Crimson Cat.

The next four years were a Banzai wasteland; zero hard facts or persistent rumors.

This changed with the onset of the internet. Buckaroo content started showing up from a few different sources, but the first one I found was the **World Watch On-Line Unofficial Buckaroo Banzai Mailing list**. [BBI ArcLight](#), who maintained and moderated the list, gets my vote for the number one unsung hero of Buckaroo fandom. For many years he gave Blue Blaze Irregulars a place to hang out and talk Buckaroo when there wasn't much else going on. I remember Alan "Dragon" Smith, Dan "Big Shoulders" Berger, and (later) Tim "Tim Boo Ba" Munro being active participants on the mailing list.

Then, in late '01 and early '02, things changed. Earl Mac Rauch's [original Buckaroo Banzai novel](#) was released as a trade paperback. As much as I love the movie, the first novel is my favorite piece of Buckaroo fiction. And finally, the official DVD, packed with extra features and deleted scenes, made its debut. After years and years, there was new BB content to talk about. It was an exciting time to be a part of ArcLight's **World Watch On-Line**.

After rereading the novel and watching the deleted scenes on the DVD, I became intrigued by Hanoi



© 1984 Orion Pictures

Xan (pronounced “Shan”). I had long enjoyed Philip José Farmer’s Wold Newton series. In it, Farmer talks of the historical Hanoi Shan, who may have been the basis for the fictional Fu Manchu. I tried to engage members of the mailing list in a discussion about Rauch’s Xan and Farmer’s Shan to no avail.

By 2004, the 20th Anniversary of **Buckaroo Banzai** was drawing nigh. Big Shoulders started talking about doing a new issue of *World Watch One*. Dragon, who, along with his wife Abacus, had put together two of the original newsletters, said he’d help. They started soliciting articles on the mailing list. I decided that if nobody was gonna write the articles I wanted to read, I’d need to do it myself. I researched Shan and Xan and then wrote up my findings. I recruited a comic book buddy of mine, Paul Gulacy, to do an illustration of Buckaroo and Xan. I still couldn’t

get anybody to talk about Xan/Shan, but I was finally able to scratch my Hanoi Xan itch.

The 20th Anniversary issue also featured the debut of Sean ‘Figmentfly’ Murphy. Figmentfly was one of the early contributors of Banzai content on the internet. He’s gone on to become one of the big

three *World Watch One* staffers and his **Buckaroo Banzai FAQ** is the go-to spot for Buckaroo info on the web.

Some say that “creative friction” lead to a run of dueling newsletters with Dragon producing the *Underground Edition* and Big Shoulders producing the *Chicago Edition* of *World Watch One*. I call it “creative energy” because fans got even more Banzai goodness than they might have.

The April 2006 issue of *World Watch One* was significant for several reasons. It was the first issue solo edited by Big Shoulders. Scott “Camelot” Tate became the fourth Musketeer of the *World Watch One* crew. Comic book artist Matt “Avalanche” Haley was interviewed and began his long association with the newsletter. The issue's highlight was the coverage of **Moonstone's** new *Buckaroo Banzai* comic book series. The editorial offices of the *Chicago Edition* of *WWO* were near the editorial offices of **Moonstone**. Big Shoulders got the inside scoop and an advanced look at the art for the comics. He even contributed Banzai background articles and an interview for the first issue. Exciting times!

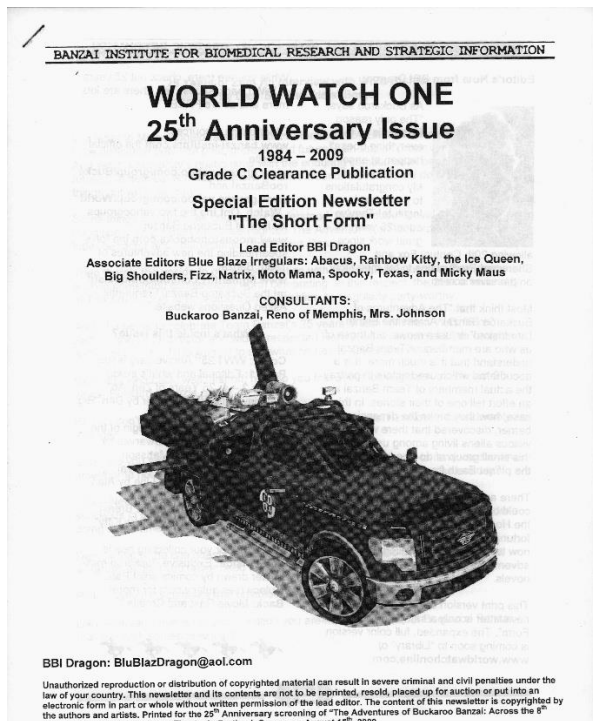
The six-year run of *Buckaroo Banzai* comic books by **Moonstone** provided content for several issues of *World Watch One*. It also helped keep Buckaroo in the public eye and

I applaud **Moonstone** for that. I enjoyed their first mini-series, *Return of the Screw*. It was based on Mac Rauch's unproduced television pilot script, “*Supersize Those Fries!*” (which is my third favorite piece of Banzai fiction). I love the Matt Haley cover to the first issue. The art by penciller Stephen Thompson and inker Keith Williams is appealing and professional. Over the next few years, many of the subsequent **Moonstone** Buckaroo comic books had excellent covers.

I mentioned that I was a fan of Science Fiction Grand Master **Philip José Farmer**. In 2008 I traveled to Peoria, IL for FarmerCon 90. FarmerCons were notable events hosted by Phil and Bette Farmer in their home. This one was a special celebration for Phil's 90th birthday. I was able to talk Wold Newton and even Hanoi Shan with Farmer fans from around the world. This is relevant to the world of Buckaroo Banzai because Big Shoulders made the trip down from Chicago to join us. Face-to-face, he and I were able to start hashing out plans for the 25th Anniversary edition of *World Watch One*.

Dragon and Big Shoulders re-teamed for the massive 25th Anniversary issue of *WWO*. I commissioned Paul Gulacy to do the cover. (Later, it was used for one of the **Moonstone** comics.) We planned to have the issue ready for the

August 15th screening of **Buckaroo Banzai** at the **Laurelhurst Theater** in Portland, OR. When we realized that we weren't going to make our deadline, Dragon and I put together the *World Watch One 25th Anniversary Issue: The Short Form*.



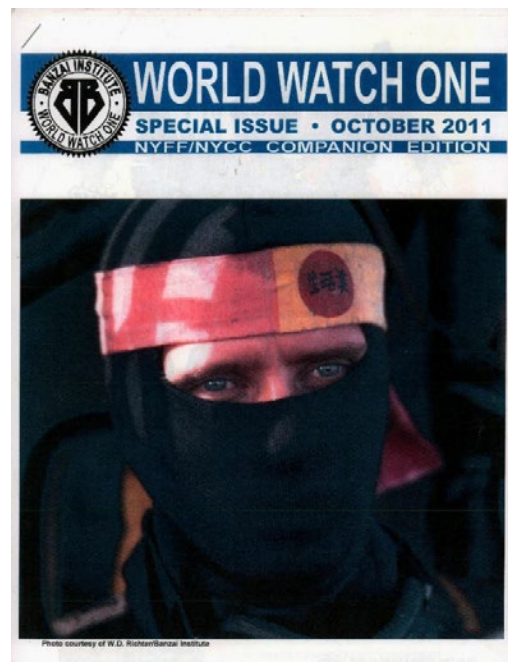
It featured a new interview with W.D. Richter by Big Shoulders and archival material from back issues of *WWO*. It was available only to fans who attended the screening in Portland.

It wasn't until the following year that we could publish what we called the *World Watch One 25.75 Anniversary Issue*. It was epic in length at over 120 pages. We were disappointed we couldn't get it out on time, but we all have families, day jobs, and side hustles. Looking

back now, I'm glad we took the time to get it right.

In 2010, I attended FarmerCon V in Seattle, WA (RIP Phil and Bette Farmer.) The con was held in conjunction with the Science Fiction Museum Hall of Fame Awards. We put together a special issue of *World Watch One* to distribute at the event. It included FarmerCon trade dress and an excellent FarmerCon 90 article by Big Shoulders.

Big Shoulders, Figmentfly, ArcLight, and I have written extensively about our meet-up in the Big Apple for the screening of **BB** hosted by Kevin Smith at the New York Film Festival. We did a special greatest hits issue of *WWO* for distribution at the **New York Comic-Con** and the **New York Flim Festival**. It featured a new message for the **Film Festival Glitterati** by W.D. Richter.



By this time, WWO's regular issues were only available online. Consider yourself extremely fortunate if you got one of these special edition hard copies at events in Portland, Seattle, or New York.

2016 was a HUGE year for Buckaroo Banzai. **Shout!** released its **Buckaroo Banzai** Blu-ray with tons and tons of extra features. Members of the **BB** cast attended **Comic-Con International** in San Diego for a signing and a panel. But the biggest news was that Buckaroo Banzai uber fan Kevin Smith was working on a BB TV series. Buckaroo fans were excited. Kevin Smith fans were excited. Even the general public was interested. Then, it became apparent that **MGM** wouldn't bring Richter or Rauch back to work on the series. There was disagreement about who owned the various pieces of the Buckaroo Banzai mythos. **MGM** sued Richter and Rauch. [Kevin Smith bowed out](#). Then, there was a long period of radio silence in public. Things were happening behind the scenes, however. We have file folders of stuff we can't share. Most of it is crap, and it's better that it didn't make it to the screen. An animated **Buckaroo Banzai** series starring Keanu Reeves had possibilities, but ultimately, it was much ado about nothing.

In 2018 **Shout!** released their out-of-print **Buckaroo Banzai** Blu-ray

in fancy steelbook packaging. No new content, but with different packaging? I'll take two, please! Also, that year, Figmentfly, Big Shoulders, and I were all guests on Brett Stillo and Josh Horowitz's **5 Minutes of Banzai** podcast. If you are reading these words, then their podcast is must-listening.

Crimson Cat and I took a summer road trip across the country. We saw many amazing American things, but the trip's highlight was lunch with director W.D. Richter in Delaware. (He picked up the tab.)

I enjoyed scouring the old *BBI Directory* for famous OG Buckaroo fans. We were able to get Kurt "Marvels" Busiek, Margaret "Dragonlance" Weis, and Jeffery "Creem Magazine" Morgan to contribute to our special 35th Anniversary issue of WWO. It seems like we just put our 35th Anniversary issue to bed and now here's our 40th. I blame COVID compression for the weird perception of time.

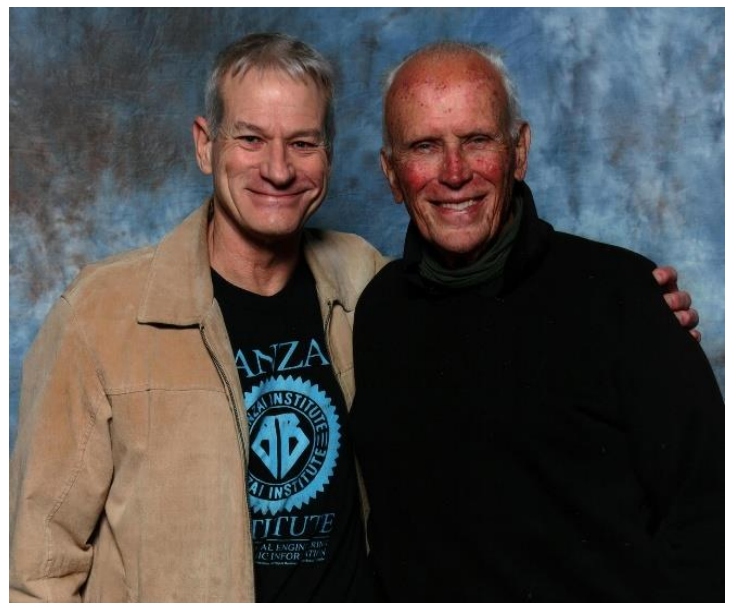
We had waited 37 years for **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai: Against the World Crime League** movie. What was coming in 2021 was the Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League, Et Al: A Compendium of Evils novel published by **Dark Horse Comics**. This was good enough for me. I mentioned that I enjoyed Mac's first Buckaroo book more than the film,

so I couldn't wait for his second. We exploited our Rick and Mac connections and some old contacts at **Dark Horse** to get advanced review copies. We scored limited-duration links to an early draft of the novel online. Can you imagine what it must have been like back then? The thrill I felt as I sat down at my computer to read the story I had been waiting decades for was priceless.

We got another Buckaroo Compendium that same year, [The Buckaroo Banzai Collector's Compendium](#) by *World Watch One* contributor DeWayne “Buckaroo Trooper” Todd. The book is a fascinating combination of the history of Buckaroo Banzai, an in-depth look at the film's marketing in the U.S. & around the world, and a catalog of DeWayne’s impressive Buckaroo Banzai collection.

In early 2024, Peter Weller was a guest at the **Fan Expo Con** in Portland. I put on my best Banzai Institute T-shirt and went to the show. When I spotted him, he had a long line waiting at his table for autographs. Behind him on the wall was a large banner that read “Peter Weller Robocop”. Somebody had taken a Sharpie and written “Dr.” before his name. I spent \$70 on the (Dr.) Peter Weller photo op. I got 20 seconds of Peter’s time and a photo documenting the interaction. The fan in line before me cradled a large

drawing wrapped in plastic. It was a carnival-style caricature of Peter as Robocop with the addition of a massive robotic penis and display lettering that read, “**ROBOCOCK!**” As Peter and the fan started to pose, Peter noticed the drawing and said, “Wait, wait. What is that?” Peter looked, chuckled ruefully, and sighed, “alright”. After my turn, I overheard Robocock-guy shouting, “Dude—I made Robocop laugh!” I’m ashamed to admit that I was thinking judgy thoughts about Robocock-guy, but in retrospect, his robotic penis drawing bought him a longer interaction with Peter Weller than I did with my Banzai Institute t-shirt. Well played, Robocock-guy, well played.



Courtesy of Rainbow Kitty

Later in the year the trade paperback edition of Against the World Crime League, Et Al was released. The reviews of the novel

weren't what we hoped for, but it sold well enough to warrant this new edition. I believe anything that keeps people talking about Buckaroo is a good thing.

We will all be talking about the upcoming [screening of Buckaroo Banzai](#) at Dartmouth College on July 18th, with W.D. Richter in attendance. Can't wait!

This year marks the 40th anniversary of ***Buckaroo Banzai*** and the 20th Anniversary of this version of *World Watch One*. As I reflect, I appreciate the people I've been able to collaborate with. I thank long-time regular contributors Dan Berger, Sean Murphy, and Scott Tate. I also enjoyed working with frequent contributors, Alan & Nancy Smith, Matt Haley, Rich Drees, Barry Chan, Tim Munro, and DeWayne & Charlie Todd. I have received crucial behind-the-scenes BB support from Shaune Mattsson, David Jackson, Scott Dutton, and Brian Hunt. It has been my honor to interview creators W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch; actors Laura Harrington, Billy Vera, Pepe Serna, and Lewis Smith; comic book artists Matt Haley, Mark Texeria, and Michael Wm. Kaluta; and crew members Radford Polinsky, Ron Veto, Tom Southwell and Rexford L. Metz, ASC. The [Rex Metz interview](#) is my favorite of the past twenty years. Rex has incredible Hollywood stories

to tell, and I am so pleased that he shared them with me so I could share them with you before his death on January 15th of this year. Rex Metz R.I.P.



Rexford L. Metz, ASC photo by Ron Veto

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #12,086: the designation HB 88 refers to Hikita/Banzai and the number of keys on a piano.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,001: The Jet Car's top speed was actually clocked a 718 MPH.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #12,560: The Jet Car's sonic boom was heard as far away as Canyon Lake.



COVER STORY

BY WORLD WATCH ONE STAFF

In the **March 2019 issue** of *World Watch One*, comics legend **Michael Wm. Kaluta** told the story of his *Buckaroo Banzai* prop comic book cover. Give the article a read if you'd like more detail. The key takeaway, however, is this quote from Michael, "I really wish I'd got to paint [the cover]. I would have done it for nothing extra at the time. I was doing painted covers for the *Conan the King* series, so it would have been no problem to really do up the Buckaroo piece! I also had no idea that the art's one or two seconds of screen time would impress the moviegoers as it did."

So, Michael would have liked to have painted his black-and-white artwork for the *Buckaroo Banzai* cover? Hmmmm...

Early this year we started planning special features for this 40th Anniversary issue of WWO. There are nice versions of Michael's black and white Buckaroo art online. We had graphic designer **Scott Dutton** re-create the *Buckaroo Banzai* logo and Marvel trade dress based on the glimpse of the comic in the movie. Scott did a

fantastic job with limited resources. Later, we found a better reference for the Buckaroo figure in the corner box. (See *Terry Erdmann's article in the issue.*) Scott refined the figure based on the new reference. Now we were ready for the next step.

We emailed Michael and reminded him of his desire to color his work. He's a busy man, but after some brainstorming, he came up with the idea of doing a limited edition of signed prints of the painted cover. We could have the first publication rights for WWO. (We will update you with ordering details for the prints when possible.)

Now, after forty years, we have the cover as Michael intended. Michael's coloring of the illustration is sinister and brooding. This contrasts with the colors in the corner box that Michael calls "bright and happy." This was done to mimic the look of a mid-80s Marvel comic book.

So, that's one key Buckaroo visual corrected. Now, if we could only figure out a way to see the entirety of *Buckaroo Banzai* as shot by cinematographer **Jordan Cronenweth**...



Screenscaps from the movie showing the comic book cover.

This was the only sample of the typeface used for the comic's *Buckaroo Banzai* logo Dutton could find. It's from an old phototypesetting catalogue. He traced the characters available in the sample and re-created the missing letters.

HONESTY IS THE BASIS OF PERSONA

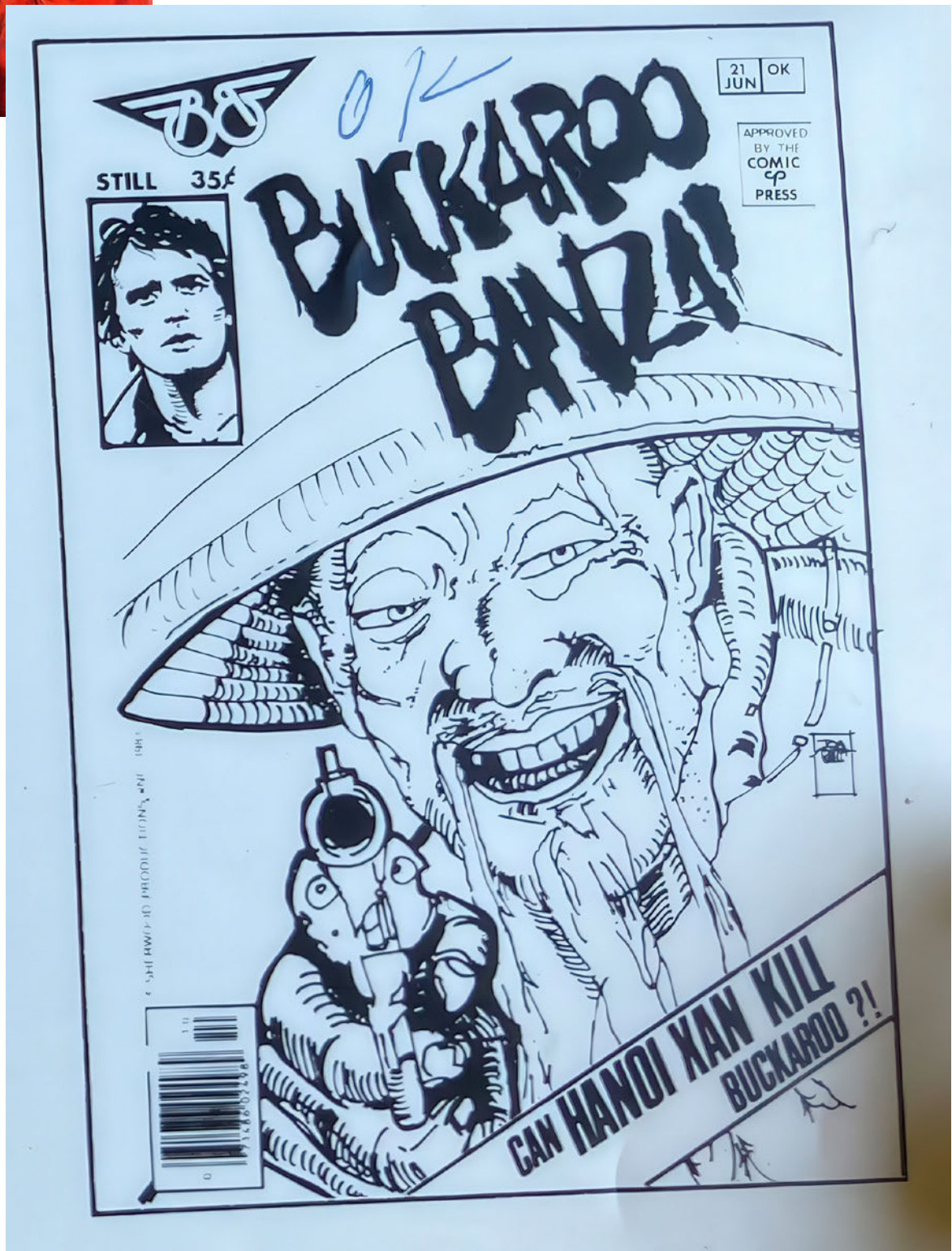
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Shanghai O*M Vol.2 p.711



Cover by Arnold Kohn

CONCEPTUAL ROUGH

One of Southwell's ideas took inspiration from *Mammoth Adventure*, a 1946 pulp magazine.





Art in layout.



ORIGINAL ART

Kaluta's amazing virgin art shows his classic pulp influences.

FINAL COVER

MARVEL

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APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

BUCKAROO BANZAI



**It can't be, "...the latest issue!"
Yes. Yes, it can.**

By Tim "Tim Boo Ba" Munro

I've heard fanboys complain that **Buckaroo Banzai** isn't realistic because of one scene. It's the one where Burt, the duck hunter, finds an issue of a *Buckaroo Banzai* comic book and says, "It's the latest issue!" The fanboys whine, "Tim, how can the first issue of the series be 'the latest issue'? It doesn't make sense!" It's true that there is a "1" in the corner box of the way cool Mike Kaluta cover, but fanboys are never as smart as they think they are.

Marvel Comics has been publishing a comic book called, *The Amazing Spider-Man* for a gazillion years.



Amazing Spider-Man #1 1963 by Steve Ditko

There is a "latest issue" of it every month. Spider-Man is Marvel's most popular character and Marvel loves to make money.

Marvel tries to make more money by adding extra Spider-Man titles; *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *Web of*

Spider-Man, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, etc. Once they ran out of cool adjectives, they came up with the brilliant idea to call a new series just, *Spider-Man*. (No adjective!)



Spider-Man #1 1990 by Todd McFarlane

It started with a #1 and was the "latest issue". See where I'm goin' with this?

In the infinite number of

Universes within the Multiverse where Buckaroo is a real guy, he's had many comic book series published about him. The first was probably called, *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*. Others may have been, *Buckaroo Banzai, MD*, *Buckaroo's Pal*, *Perfect Tommy*, *Swing with The Hong Kong Cavaliers*, etc. This led to the first issue of the (adjective less) *Buckaroo Banzai* comic book.

Burt the duck hunter knows his shit and fanboys don't.



THE WORLD WATCH ONE 40th ANNIVERSARY INTERVIEW with W. D. RICHTER and EARL MAC RAUCH

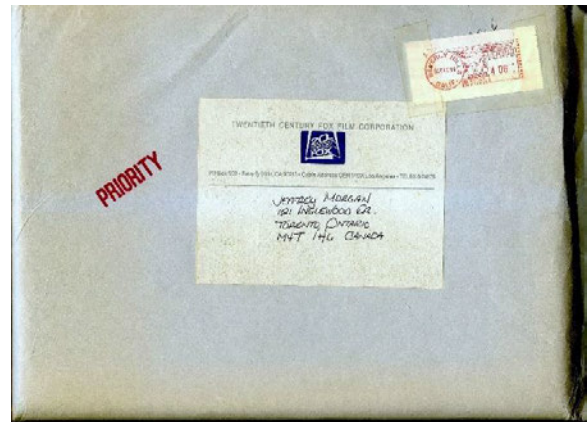
By Jeffrey “Machine Rock” Morgan

PART ONE: CONFESSIONS OF A BLUE BLAZE IRREGULAR

I’m the guy who knows what he’s talking about, so you can believe me when I tell you that I happen to know a few things about epochal myth-making, what with me being the authorized biographer of both Alice Cooper (published by Warner Bros. in 1999) and Iggy Pop & The Stooges (published by New Haven in 2024). I’m also the author of *The Brides of Mister X* (published by Dark Horse in 2011), which *Rolling Stone* calls “one of the fifty best non-superhero graphic novels.” So what. Big deal. As impressive as those credits may seem to some, they’re chump change small potatoes compared to my being an original Blue Blaze Irregular, no lie.

But four decades ago I hadn’t written any of them, so that wasn’t the case. Can you imagine what it must have been like back then when I was in the rock critic business of entertaining mirth-making and blissfully unaware of what was about to transpire? It was exactly seven days before Halloween night in 1984, when I received a heavy three pound, one and a quarter inch thick grey envelope in the mail,

boldly hand-stamped PRIORITY in bright red ink, postmarked October 11th, and costing an equally hefty four dollars and six cents to mail from Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation in Beverly Hills to my digs in downtown Toronto.



Courtesy of Jeffrey Morgan

Carefully unsealing the end flap and extracting the contents, I was astonished to behold a plethora of what initially seemed to be well over one hundred pages of publicity materials, ostensibly for a film I had just seen in my local downtown art deco movie emporium mere months earlier. However, those unassailable hard facts turned out to be nothing more but mere baseless assumptions on my part when I realized that the film I had seen, which would later be dismissively described in a court document as “a comedic science-fiction story” was, in actuality, a crucial true-life docudrama; and that many of the promotional materials contained within were nothing less than carefully disguised declassified

As the months passed, these sporadic mailings continued unabated until, in April 1987, I was officially designated as a Blue Blaze Irregular with my name enshrined in the official Blue Blaze Directory on page twelve, column one, paragraph three; you could look it up.



By that time I had established my Banzai bonafides in several ways, from mentioning the Hong Kong Cavaliers in the December 1984 issue of CREEM: America's Only Rock 'n' Roll Magazine,

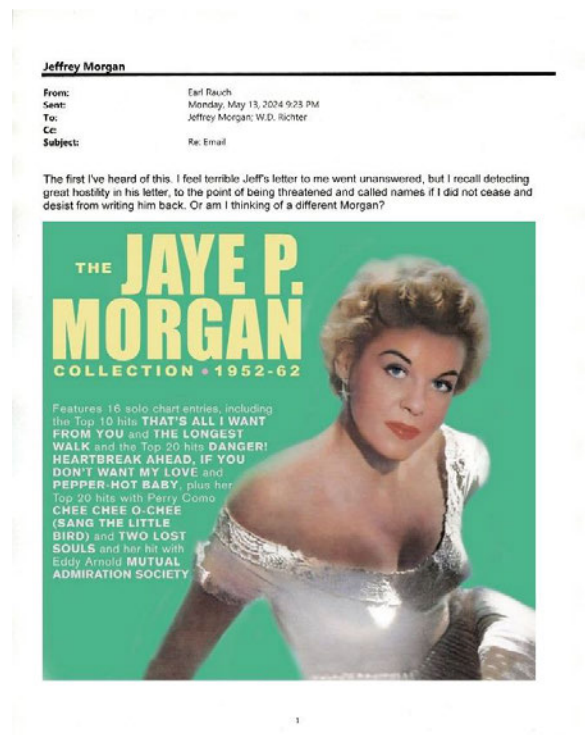


to later corresponding with the Institute to bemoan the fact that the Vestron video had a misspelling on the cassette label and had the left and right channels reversed when played on my JVC stereo VCR. I also wrote a fan letter to Earl Mac Rauch which was rightfully never replied to because I had the temerity to address him as “Earl.”

As such, I've been "on-call" twenty-four hours a day for the past forty years, patiently waiting to help Team Banzai in a pinch—which is why I was ready when the call finally came from Steve Mattsson to meet with W. D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch to celebrate four decades of Buckaroo Banzai.

PART TWO : CONVERSATIONS WITH A BLUE BLAZE IRREGULAR

I barely have time to sit down on the Naugahyde couch at the front of the Hong Kong Cavaliers' tour bus when Mac (Earl Mac Rauch) glances at his watch impatiently. "Anything else? When I was a reporter, we asked them quicker than that."



Courtesy of Jeffrey Morgan

Rick (W. D. Richter) laughs at the look of dismay on my face and it takes me a few seconds before I recognize the Charlie Kane quote. "If I say anything that contradicts what Mac might say, he's right."

"Fair enough," I said. "I'll try not to repeat any questions which have already been asked and answered over the years." Then, opening up

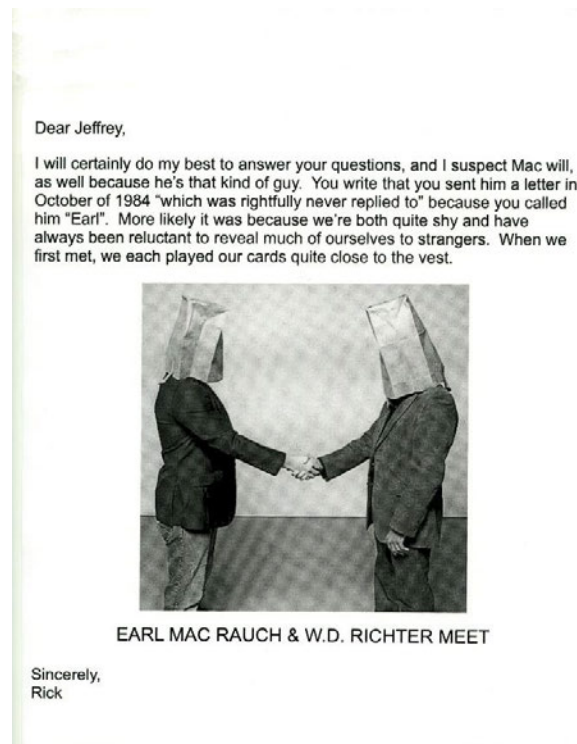
my Team Banzai binder, I began to read.

"When *Buckaroo Banzai* was first released in 1985 on Vestron video tape VA5058, it was initially assumed from the grainy pan and scan image that the telephone number on the side of the Rug Suckers van was 826-1924—and not without good reason, as we will soon learn. But with the subsequent reissue of the docudrama on increasingly higher resolution formats over the ensuing years, the phone number can now be plainly seen, appropriately enough given the year of the docudrama's release, as 826-1984. However, these new higher resolution images also clearly show that the second number 8 in 1984 has been altered. A comparison of the first two numbers 82 with the last two numbers 84 unmistakably shows that the 8 was originally a 2 and painted over to look like an 8. In other words, the 826-1984 phone number actually is 826-1924 as originally surmised. But why the subterfuge?"

"Is this a question or a monologue?" Mac interjected.

"Don't you get it?" I replied. "The answer lies in the numerical sequence when you realize that the initial telephone number can be deciphered as the calendar date August 26th 1924. For on that date in 1924, the *New York Times*

reported that Babe Ruth hit his 40th home run of the year against the Indians, who lost 8 to 3.”



Courtesy of Jeffrey Morgan

“Well done, Jeffrey!” Rick interrupted.” But that’s not the whole story. Okay, for the thousandth time: Ruth, as we all know, was, like Orson Welles, a big fat lush and was blasted out of his skull that hot August day in 1924. What a testimony to his athletic gifts that he could still even see the ball, never mind belt it clear outta the park! Please realize that The Babe was a special hero to the three Rug Sucker brothers because, like the Kolodney brothers, they grew up with an alcoholic dad, Karl Rug Sucker, Jr., in their case, and knew how hard it was on their pop being

drunk most of the time while he was trying to run the family business.

“So after Karl’s untimely and mysterious death at a flower show, the twins Kaspar and Knut and their younger brother Gottschalk (a.k.a. ‘Bambino’) Rug Sucker petitioned the phone company and got themselves that 826-1924 phone number for their business (they, too, were florists) as a tribute to both Karl and The Babe. Mike Riva had the ‘2’ painted over (with easily removable watercolors) and changed to 826-1984 to protect the Rug Sucker brothers from prying fans after the movie was released.”

Undaunted by this unexpected revelation, I bravely continued. “In his book *Banzai Babe Ruth* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), author Robert F. Kitts writes about the legendary Yankees slugger’s stay in Japan during the 1934 All America tour, and how it had global espionage ramifications which resulted in an assassination attempt by samurai sword.”

“Kitts made much of that book up, but continue,” Rick interjected.

“So, given that August 26th 2024 marks the one hundredth anniversary of that *New York Times* story about Babe Ruth’s 40th home run, and given that this is the 40th anniversary of the Buckaroo

Banzai docudrama, is it a hard fact or a persistent rumor that Babe Ruth was, indeed, a Blue Blaze Irregular whose code name was Bambino?”

I looked up. The silence in the bus was palpable. Then Mac cleared his throat.

“Jeff, you’ve obviously done some serious digging,” Mac slowly replied,” but I wouldn’t worry about repetitive questions, since in my own case I never answer a question the same way twice. There are many truths. It might be the case that the Bambino was a proto-Blue Blaze Irregular who foresaw the future or even a Blue Blaze time traveler who carried the Buckaroo ethos back to the early 1990’s. Even if I knew the answer, I probably wouldn’t say. There were constant rumors that the Pentagon and FBI were looking over our shoulders during the whole script development process, and then of course when we found the hollowed-out watermelon with the camera and listening device inside, our suspicions seemed to be confirmed, although there was always an alternative theory that the culprit was paranoid Begelman. Maybe Rick knows more, if he’s at liberty to say.”

“Yes on one and no on two,” Rick replied. “Young Gottschalk Rug Sucker was able to claim the

‘Bambino’ handle as his own because, decades earlier, Ruth had asked that his Blue Blaze Irregular *nom de plume* be ‘Pigtown,’ after the neighborhood in Baltimore where he was born. Next?”

“In the docudrama, there is a scene in the Bunkhouse wherein New Jersey is sitting at the grand piano slowly playing the ‘Buckaroo Banzai March’ from a book of sheet music. After a few bars, he stops with an abrupt chord that causes everyone to look up. Was it musical frustration or a mental revelation that caused Sidney to cut short his recital in so sudden a manner?”

“I’ll have to take a pass, as I have no idea,” Mac replied, looking to his right. “Rick?”

“Musical frustration,” Rick began. “Normally, Rawhide tickled the ivories at all Banzai Institute holiday gatherings (Thanksgiving, Veterans’ Day, Valentines’ Day, The Fourth of July, what have you) playing his radical, bluesy version of the ‘Buckaroo Banzai March’ around midnight. But Buckaroo had just told New Jersey, on the bus ride to the Institute, that he, Sidney, would be Rawhide’s understudy from now on. A terrifying prospect, and New Jersey hopped on the first piano he saw to take a feeble whack at it, with Rawhide in the room, no less.”

“My third question contains three thoughts,” I began. “First thought. Even if one were able to use Doc Brown’s customized DeLorean to rocket 88 miles per hours and go back in time to the late ’80s or early ’90s to film the *World Crime League* sequel, the cost of subsequently reconvening such an all star ensemble cast would no doubt be somewhat daunting if not entirely prohibitive.”

“Second thought. Many an astute culture vulture has often observed in retrospective hindsight that, sartorially speaking, the Hong Kong Cavaliers were the inspirational template for the original manga and subsequent anime series *Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure*.”

“Combining these two thoughts, wouldn’t an ideal situation going forward be to create an animated *Buckaroo Banzai* series done in the classic anime style, voiced either by those original cast members who could still be acquired or by a new passel of performers?”

“You’d think that would be an obvious and exciting way to see if ‘the franchise’ had any life left in it,” Rick replied. “But if it were obvious, everybody would be doing it, and yet over the years the many companies who’ve held the rights to ‘Buckaroo’ have been run by such visionaries that doing the obvious was beneath all of them.”

“Question three is intriguing,” added Mac. “As Rick says, there have been feelers out for an animated series in the past but obviously nothing that ever came to fruition. Since we have no control over Buckaroo and no relationship with MGM, what’s the point of speculating?”

“Okay,” I said, turning to another page in the binder. “Although many have remarked on the similarities between Dr. Banzai and the Street & Smith pulp fiction character Doc Savage, there are equal areas of convergence between Buckaroo and his team and another Street & Smith pulp fiction hero and *his* agents, namely The Shadow—especially in terms of their narrative formats.”

“The latter’s exploits were always revealed ‘from The Shadow’s private annals as told to Maxwell Grant.’ Much in the same way, one could almost envision reading ‘from Buckaroo Banzai’s private annals as told to Reno.’ Of course, Walter B. Gibson was the intercessor then much in the same way that Earl Mac Rauch is the intercessor now. Is this classic literary inheritance by accident or by design?”

Mac took a deep breath. “If we were developing ‘Buckaroo’ today, I would certainly know about Doc Savage via the internet, as everything else is known these days, but forty-plus

years ago I would have had to discover him in a used bookstore, so I really had no idea about him. I've said many times that the inspiration for Buckaroo was always Gene Autry, a singing cowboy and movie star of the '40s and '50s I used to watch in Saturday afternoon serials at my local theater. Like Buckaroo, he had his own traveling posse and played himself in the episodes, which often featured sci-fi gimmickry like robots mixed with standard horse opera elements and, of course, the obligatory musical moments with Gene strumming the guitar and singing."

"The Shadow I knew of from cultural osmosis—'The Shadow knows' and so on—but, again, I wasn't familiar with the old pulp mags. I also hadn't even given a thought to writing a Buckaroo novel until the idea of the movie novelization came up and, to make it interesting, I decided to let Reno tell the tale as Buckaroo's amanuensis, *a la* Holmes's Dr. Watson or Johnson's Bosworth. That's really all there was to it."

"By accident," Rick was quick to add. "Hard as it is to believe, neither Mac nor I ever thought about Doc Savage or The Shadow as precursors to Buckaroo. Our influences were Holmes and Watson on the one hand and on the other that Gene Autry 1935 epic serial (directed by the great Otto Brower and the cranky Breezy Eason) called

The Phantom Empire but also known as *Radio Ranch*. In 1940, somebody turned that serial into a seventy-minute movie called, alternately, *The Phantom Empire* and *Men With Steel Faces*. Next question, please. What number are we up to? Feels like somewhere in the sixties by now."

"Actually, we're only up to five," I cautiously clarified.

"Five?!" Rick exclaimed over Mac's groans. "Yikes! No way. Steve promised these would all be multiple choice! Okay, hit me."

"In 1955, while talking about his 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast, Orson Welles almost gave the game away when he candidly confessed: 'During the years that have gone by since then, I've heard a number of stories about things that happened. Some of them *may* seem hard to believe, but they're all verified.' He then went on to hedge his bet by slyly adding: 'You'll find them in a very scholarly book that Princeton University got out on the subject of mass hysteria.'"

"That very scholarly book, which was published in 1940, is *The Invasion From Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic* by Hadley Cantril. On page 201, Mr. Cantril ends by writing: 'The diagnosis we have so far made should be concluded with a report on this type of case in general together with

suggestions as to how such panics may be prevented. The educator and the social scientist who is a citizen as well as a scholar will ask: 'So what?'

"Is this a big deal?"

"From where I sit today," Rick said leaning forward, "most everything is because, and correct me if I'm wrong on this, if it's not one thing, it's another. Interestingly, though, you react to Princeton's own Hadley Cantril's assertion that 'The educator and the social scientist who is a citizen as well as a scholar will ask: 'So what?' ' by legitimately wondering 'Is this a big deal?'—your Question Five. I've read Professor Hadley's statement several times now, and I have to ask: 'So what *what*, Hadley?' "

"Question five, I have no idea about," Mac said, checking his watch again.

"Okay, this is a short one," I began while Mac snorted with derision. "From the 1949 Oldsmobile Rocket 88 (the first muscle car) to the ROCKIT 88 license plate (the first jet car) to the Hong Kong Cavaliers covering 'Rocket 88' (the first rock song), the Buckaroo Banzai docudrama is infused with a surfeit of firsts, all fueled by a high-octane rock 'n' roll sensibility. Asking that musical question: What kinds of music do you enjoy, both then and now?"

"All sorts but not much," Rick replied before sheepishly adding: "That's a pretty lame answer, I know. Sorry."

"Question five, about my favorite music," Mac mused. "I don't know where to begin and could spend all day on this. I'll just say that as a child of the '60s, I grew up with guitar rock and played in a couple of bands, so I suppose rock 'n' roll will always be my nostalgic go-to genre, although prog rock less so. I still like metal and enjoy outlaw country; unvarnished old country before it went mainstream."

"I like old school hip-hop. Tupac, Digital Underground, Public Enemy. *It Takes A Nation Of Millions* would be near the top of my pantheon, next to Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* that I've listened to a hundred times, along with Miles Davis and many other jazz guys. My sentimental favorites would be: Laura Nyro, Dinah Washington, Tim Hardin, and others. My favorite concerts would be: Rammstein, Prince, The Clash, Allman Brothers, James Brown, Static-X, Santana, Azucar Moreno, the beat goes on.

"In a perfect world we could all make music for a living. I envy your work in that world."

"My last question requires some personal reflection," I began. "Four decades after the fact, how does it feel to have created something of

such lasting value which has brought so much entertainment and enjoyment to countless people around the world over the past forty years, knowing that such unabated joy and unbridled laughter will continue to culturally resonate and generate new fondness and goodwill for a great many decades to come?”

Mac paused to take a deep breath before replying. “Looking back, I don't think Rick and I appreciated at the time how miraculous it was that the film got made. The miracle lay in the fact that the studio (Begelman) thought he was getting a different movie. How he could have read the script and thought he was getting a Spielberg blockbuster on the cheap will always be a mystery to us, but fortunately that was the case and he greenlighted the film, further proving that so much in life is accidental.”

“Unfortunately, because the film was deemed ‘strange,’ it was more or less dumped without fanfare on an unsuspecting American public, leading to the second miracle: namely that it continues to generate interest forty years on, kept alive thanks to the dedication of a cadre of loyal fans who organized themselves into a network over the new-fangled Internet. Whatever popularity the film enjoys today is because of that community of fans who refused to let Buckaroo die, so while I’m happy Buckaroo still

makes people smile, Rick and I can’t take all the credit. It’s a shared credit with the fans.”

“So, tip of the hat, Jeffrey. Thanks.”

“It feels comforting and certainly strange to me,” Rick began. “We had mostly fun making the movie, and it’s nice to know so many interesting people over the last four decades have taken great pleasure, and I hope even comfort, from Buckaroo.”

“Thanks for getting it, Jeffrey. Thank you for your amazing, unrelenting support for Dr. Banzai and his band over the decades. It’s weird but wonderful and means a lot to Mac and me to hear of it. You’ve accomplished enough in life that I’m amazed you found the time to get pulled into BB, as well. Just please keep flying the flag when you have a spare minute because, in the enduring words of Junior Blue Blaze Irregular Casper Lindley: ‘Dad! Dad! Buckaroo’s in trouble!’ ”

Then Rick held up his hand. “I should’ve said ‘Scooter’ for clarity, but ‘Scooter’ is just his nickname. The little shaver is actually ‘Casper Lindley, Jr.’ ”

“Couldn’t have said it as well myself,” Mac added. “Ponder this: If someone making a film today in 2024 is aware of BB’s current popularity forty years on, then when we made the film in 1983, we’d have had to be looking at films made in

1943 to find something ‘unusual’ that was still enjoying a rabid fan base in ’83.”

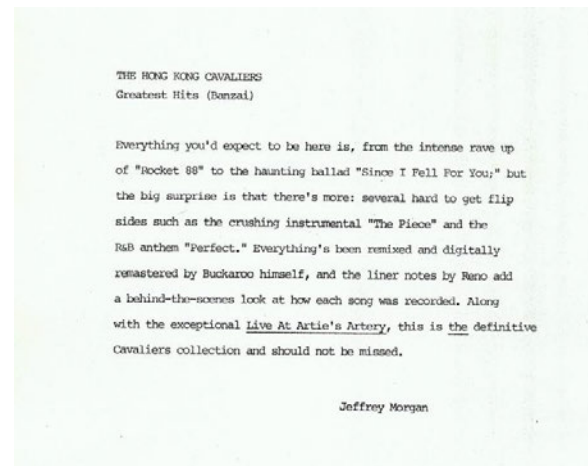
“Gentlemen,” I concluded, “it’s been a pleasure and an honor to speak with you and I sincerely thank you for your very kind words which, I assure you, are greatly appreciated. And Rick? I look forward to digging deeper into the Banzai-Burton connection with you in 2026 for the 40th anniversary of *Big Trouble In Little China*.”

“The rumored ‘Banzai-Burton connection,’ huh?” Rick smiled and gave me a knowing look. “Folks sure get a lotta crazy ideas in their heads.”

I was about to ask a pertinent follow-up question about the license plate on Jack’s truck when the tour bus door opened and a familiar voice genially said: “Hey, hey, hey. Are you three guys going to sit here and talk shop all night or do you want to come out and listen to some music? We’re on in fifteen, so c’mon. Let’s rock ’n’ roll.”

You can believe me when I tell you that the Hong Kong Cavaliers performed for just over two hours, not including the three encores they had to play before the audience finally let them leave the stage a little after midnight. But don’t worry if you weren’t there because the scuttlebutt has it that the entire gig was recorded for their next triple live

album. And I’m the guy who knows what he’s talking about.



Courtesy of Jeffrey Morgan



Pinky Carruthers’ Unknown Fact #22,807: Earl Mac Rauch played with a band called, “[The Wobblies](#)” during the early ‘80s.

Pinky Carruthers’ Unknown Fact #8,506: Rawhide’s fave song: “Anything ending with a C note.”

Pinky Carruthers’ Unknown Fact #6,070: Buckaroo rarely plays piano at gigs.

Pinky Carruthers’ Unknown Fact #8,391: Perfect Tommy’s Pet Peeve: “People that can’t dance”.



A Guide to Watching *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* for the First Time

By Glen “West Jersey” Tickle

I love *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension*. It is my favorite movie of all time, and I talk about it a lot. Most people I try to talk to about it haven't heard of it, or vaguely remember it, and when I do meet someone who also loves the movie they usually remember it fondly from its release in 1984. But not me. I saw it for the first time in 2018.

I talk about the movie so much that friends and even strangers online have told me that they finally watched *Buckaroo* because I bring it up so much, but for some reason they usually reach out to let me know that they didn't like it and don't understand why I love it.

I've thought about it, and I think what's missing from these people's first viewing experience is the context that made me love the movie so much the first time. I didn't even wait until the end of the movie. I was only 19 minutes in before I decided it was the greatest piece of art I'd ever encountered.

So here is a retelling of my first time watching *Buckaroo* in the form of actionable steps one can take or

recommend to others to get the most out of the experience.

Step 1: Watch *Ready Player One*



Ready Player One from Amblin Entertainment

Ready Player One is a book many people told me I would like that I never got around to reading, so I was relieved when they made it into a movie so I could just watch that instead. It's a movie I enjoy considerably less than *Buckaroo Banzai*, but fans of *BB* might remember that one of Buckaroo's outfits make a cameo and characters talk about liking the movie.

This will remind you that *Buckaroo Banzai* is a movie you've heard of that seems like the kind of thing you'd enjoy but that you still haven't seen. Or at least that's what it did for me. It will also put you in the mood to watch a cool sci-fi movie from the 80s

because all **Ready Player One** does is reference other, better movies.

You could probably skip this step, but it laid some important ground work for me so it seems like a good place to start.

Step 2: Be From New Jersey



Not Pennsylvania from Alamy

This one's optional since you can't really do anything about it at this point, but the fact that I am a lifelong resident of New Jersey (NOT Pennsylvania, please stop spreading this vicious rumor) it was pretty endearing to see that most of **Buckaroo Banzai** takes place in, or in orbit over, New Jersey. They even named a character New Jersey!

I'm not a fan of everything that's set in my home state, but it's never going to hurt your chances of getting me on your side.

Step 3: Start a Career in Standup Comedy



Courtesy of Glen Tickle

I did this in 2009, almost a decade before watching **Buckaroo Banzai** for the first time. You probably don't need quite that much time, but performing for a few hundred audiences will help you better understand a critical moment in the movie, and the one that made me decide it was my favorite.

At about the 19-minute mark Buckaroo and the Hong Kong Cavaliers are on stage at Artie's Artery. The crowd is loving it. People are doing the most 1984 dancing they can muster. It looks like everyone is having a blast, but mid-song Buckaroo shuts the whole thing down to ask, "Is someone out there not having a good time?"

This is where your years in standup will pay off in making you love this movie. The goal of a comedian is to make sure everyone is having a good time, and if you're performing for let's say 200 people, and 199 of them are falling out of their chairs laughing at

your jokes but one of them isn't; that's who you focus on.

Or at least I do. So does Buckaroo Banzai, so that's at least two people.

Most of the other comedians I've talked to about this agree that we tend to zero-in on anyone not enjoying the performance way more than the people who are. It's probably because we've built careers out of desperately seeking the approval of strangers, something I'm sure is very healthy and normal.

Maybe you're angry with them for not laughing. Maybe you secretly agree with them and wonder why everyone else is having such a ball. Or maybe, like Buckaroo, you're just curious about what could be wrong.

I don't really recommend grinding a show to a halt to find out why one lady is crying, no matter how much she looks like your dead wife, but Buckaroo's empathy in that moment really made me care about him as a character. Sure, he performs brain surgery, drives through mountains, and can really wail on a pocket trumpet, but he does it all while being nice. Because hey, "Don't be mean. You don't have to be mean."

Step 4: Have a New Baby

Around 4am the night/morning after ***Ready Player One*** reminded me

that ***Buckaroo Banzai*** was a movie I'd heard of but haven't seen I was up with my new daughter, who was then only a few weeks old and not yet sleeping through the night. She's six now and still doesn't sleep through the night. That's not really relevant, but if you could spare some Buckaroo-level empathy for a tired dad, I'd appreciate it.

The baby wasn't sleeping and the great thing about children that little is that they haven't started asking to watch ***Peppa Pig*** yet, so you can just put on whatever you want while you try to get them to fall back to sleep, even though you both know they're not going to.



Peppa Pig from Hasbro

So, sleep deprived, I scrolled through various streaming services to find something to watch and saw the cover image for ***Buckaroo Banzai*** in the mix. I had just been reminded of it hours earlier by a different movie, and the coincidence convinced me to put it on.

My baby seemed indifferent to it, but I was enthralled.

Step 5: Watch it Again

I did this step the next day, and the day after, and a lot of days since. It's almost always what I put on in a hotel room after a show to help wind down because it's so comforting and familiar to me at this point.

But that second viewing is key. After all, you watched it the first time in the wee small hours of the morning. Could it have really been that good? So you watch it again, and yes. Of course it is. It, like Tommy himself, is Perfect.

Step 6: Head to Wikipedia

The title ***The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension*** on its own implies that there are more adventures. Obviously, this was just one of many adventures Buckaroo et al have had, so you turn to the internet to find where you can watch the other ones. Heck, the movie itself even promises Buckaroo's return in ***Against the World Crime League***.

Sadly, you can't find anymore Buckaroo movies because you realize they don't exist. You read through the movie's Wikipedia page thinking, well maybe it's an adaptation of an old series like Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon. You realize that those stories inspired Buckaroo, but there's not a

rich catalog of back issues or pulp novels waiting for you.

You read about the production troubles and why there's a watermelon there. You find the original opening and realize that Jamie Lee Curtis is Buckaroo's mom.

You find out there are comics, so you track those down, but there's never enough. You want there to be more Banzai, but there's not, so you just dig into whatever information you can find. Eventually you find a fanzine, and then they find you and ask you to write something.

Step 7: Think About It All the Time

It's the fact that ***Across the Eighth Dimension*** feels so much like one story of many that really hooked me. It's not an origin story. It doesn't really explain who the characters are in relation to each other, or how they came together. Honestly I didn't realize which character was Buckaroo until Peter Weller takes his helmet off after the jet car experiment.

We are thrown into this world in medias res and it's on you to catch up. Buckaroo and the Hong Kong Cavaliers have had adventures before this, and they'll have adventures after.

We were promised a sequel that never happened because of the financial

shortcomings of the movie. Every once in a while there's rumors of something new. Another comic series, a reboot, a tv show, a... novel.

More Banzai is the carrot at the end of the stick. There could always be more, but you're not drowning in a never-ending sea of carrots like other franchises. There's just enough Banzai to keep fans interested until hopefully another adventure comes along.

So there you go. I'm not sure anyone reading an article in a fanzine celebrating the 40th anniversary of a movie *hasn't* already seen that movie, but if you haven't, give these steps a try, or recommend them to others. I'm sure I would have still loved ***The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension*** if I watched it at a reasonable hour, or didn't see *Ready Player One*, or grew up in the fictional state of Delaware, but maybe not as much.

Blue Blaze Irregular Glen Tickle signing off.

Check out Glen's [website](#) here and watch his comedy special ***Glen Tickle Against the World Crime League***.

*Glen Tickle is a comedian from New Jersey (Not Pennsylvania; he can't stress this enough) who has appeared on Dry Bar Comedy, the Travel Channel, and CoziTV, and can be heard on SiriusXM. He has millions of views on TikTok. He is a competitive Dr. Mario player, a bad violin player, and a competent juggler. His favorite movie is **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension** and hopes to play the role of New Jersey in the eventual remake.*

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,511: Time is of the essence".

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #69: Muammar Gaddafi's favorite movie is Buckaroo Banzai.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #40,055: During the massive post-raid/excavation of Yoyodyne, John Whorfin's private quarters revealed a cache of edible panties. In addition, Buckaroo and the boys found various human and Lectroid skeletons seated around a carved ice swan.



Interview: Pepe Serna “Life is Art”

By Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson

We published a long interview with Pepe “Reno” Serna in the [January 2022 issue of World Watch One](#). In it, Pepe regaled us with stories about *Buckaroo Banzai* and his adventures in Hollywood. Pepe also spoke of his work on a documentary film about his life called, *Life is Art* and a book by the same title.



Courtesy of Pepe Serna

Both the documentary and book are now completed. We reached out to Pepe for ordering information and he was happy to oblige. Pepe also wanted to clarify his story about *Buckaroo Banzai* screenwriter Earl Mac Rauch. This led to more stories about Mac and an anecdote about Jamie Lee Curtis that we had never heard. We wish to thank Pepe for his continued friendship with *World Watch One*.

Steve Mattsson: There are multiple screenings of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* scheduled around the country in honor of its 40th Anniversary. What’s the reason for the enduring appeal of this film?

Pepe Serna: The writing and directing of it was everything. Rauch and Richter were originals. But you never know why something catches hold. That’s the question Hollywood’s been asking forever, right? And its answer is always to copy the most recent successful thing. *Buckaroo* is one that should have had its sequels. I signed up for four movies. They were optimistic for the future and with good reason. It was totally different from the other sci-fi stuff.

SM: Yes, it cut across the Hollywood grain by *not* copying anything.

PS: For me, it was important for how the movie portrayed Reno, a Chicano. He was an American Mexican-American. Hollywood hasn’t always been good in its portrayal of minorities. It was great to be able to play a character who was just a human being. His background had nothing to do with the story. It was just interesting.



<https://movie-screencaps.com/>

SM: Yes, Pepe—Reno was a cool dude.

PS: They let me bring a little of my own...how can I say it? “rock & roll swagger” to the role. I had the look from all the rock & roll outfits that my wife had made me; black leather tuxedos, rhinestone lapels, all kinds of cool stuff going on. I looked the part even though I couldn’t sing.

SM: But you could act like you could sing.

PS: [Laughter] We talked about that in the last interview.

SM: Okay, any new stories about the making of **Buckaroo Banzai**? Interesting anecdotes?

PS: Mac and Rick were a different sort of writer/director team than I had experienced. They had a natural familial appreciation for every character in the film. They made the set a comfortable place to work. It was fun to be a part of the world they were creating. They were like a couple of kids playing this video game, right? And we were their characters having the adventure. They were so quiet and unassuming, not bombastic in any sense. But they were able to build this synergy between the cast and crew. They treated everybody with kindness and a smile and were very funny.

SM: They sound like good people to work with.

PS: They were great people to work with. It was especially fun hanging out with Mac when he was on set. He’d tell me jokes in Spanish.

SM: You told a story in the last interview about Mac’s affinity for Chicano culture...

PS: I said that Mac used to join Chicano clubs in Texas, but that came across like he was going to music clubs in town. He was going to academic clubs at the University. It was at the school where he would dye his hair black and hang out to work on his Spanish. They would think he was a Chicano because his Spanish was so good. I don’t know where his love of the language and the culture came from. I do know that later he married a Costa Rican woman.

SM: So, was Mac hanging out with you on set to practice his Spanish?

PS: [Laughter] Reno was the author of the Buckaroo Banzai adventures, so I always thought I was playing Mac's alter ego. Maybe I was hanging out with him to work on my role. [Laughter] Come to think of it though, every character was his alter ego. There's plenty of Rawhide, Perfect Tommy, and Buckaroo in Mac too.

SM: And Pinky Carruthers?

PS: [Laughter] No, Pinky was 100% Billy Vera.

SM: [Laughter] Any other stories from the set?

PS: Did I tell you the one about Jamie Lee Curtis?

SM: No. I would remember a Jamie Lee Curtis story.

PS: She was going out with our Production Designer at the time...

SM: J. Michael Riva?

PS: Right, Mike Riva. Jamie wanted to be in the movie. She ended up playing Buckaroo's Mom, but she wanted to play Reno. A bunch of the cast were out at a club, and she was telling a story about trying to get an audition for Reno with the producers. This was before I was cast.

SM: Jamie Lee Curtis playing Reno would have been interesting, but I'm glad it turned out the way it did.

PS: [Laughter] Me too! It was wonderful being in ***The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai***, to be part of Team Banzai, to be part of the Hong Kong Cavaliers. Everybody's dream is to play a rock & roller and be in a sci-fi movie. And it was so diverse, the world of Buckaroo Banzai, our characters came from all over the

place. And the actors—Billy Vera and I were fans of each other already. And when I say a fan, I mean someone you feel a connection to. A great cast.

SM: Pepe, the last time we talked, you were in the middle of working on your Life is Art autobiography and your ***Life is Art*** film documentary. You've finished them now. What kind of reception have they received?

PS: That's an interesting thing. I've been in so many great movies, but I'm a character actor. People know my face, but not my name. I'm like the lead-off hitter. My job is to get on base so when the star hits a homer, the team gets an extra run. But I'm the star of my documentary, so the reaction has been different than what I am used to.

SM: How about the reaction to the book?

PS: I'm proud of the way the book turned out. It's like three or four books in one. It's my life story. It's behind the scenes in Hollywood. It's got a full color section of my paintings and it's got my philosophy—the book is full of "Pepeisms".

SM: Where can we watch the documentary and buy the book?

PS: You can watch the movie on **Apple TV** and **Amazon Prime**. You can buy the book on my [website](#). My website also has information about my paintings and improv workshops.

SM: Any other new Pepe Serna movies or TV shows we should watch for?

PS: I've got a couple of movies coming up. The first is, ***Aquí No Es Así***, or in English, ***It's Not the Same Here***. It's by director Pedro Pérez Nuñez, who got his U.S. citizenship through the DACA program. It's got a really interesting concept. It's about parallel Universes or the Multiverse. It's like the Marvel movies, or ***Everything, Everywhere, All at Once***...or even ***Buckaroo Banzai!***

SM: [Laughter]

PS: It's a Parallel Universe story from a Chicano immigrant's point-of-view.

SM: Oh, that does sound interesting.

PS: Yeah! I play a professor who has also experienced the Multiverse and has authored a book on the subject. Everybody thinks I'm crazy, but then more and more people come to my class who've had similar

experiences. I don't want to say too much more.

SM: Understood. And the second movie?

PS: It's called, ***Look in My Eyes***. We're still raising money for it, but I play a psychologist who works with children who are on the spectrum. It's set in the age of the internet, webcams, and Zoom meetings. Doctors can consult with colleagues all over the World to try to help their patients, which is great, but progress is really made when the parents of these children start working together. We are going to film in El Paso, hopefully pretty soon.

SM: Anything else before we sign off, Pepe?

PS: I turn eighty this summer and ***Buckaroo Banzai*** turns forty. I'm enjoying the ride.

SM: ¡Feliz cumpleaños, Pepe! And congratulations on a highly creative life.

PS: Life is art.

Those who follow Pepe online may have noticed that he has experienced some poor health recently. Pepe wants his fans to know that he is feeling better and the best way to support him is by checking out his book and film.

Buckaroo Banzai is a Loose Canon

By Clayton "T-Bone" Barr

My website PopApostle.com has a become a minor-but-somewhat-known destination for my fellow nerds who seek the minutiae of their favorite media addictions. As it says at the top of the home page, "Welcome to PopApostle.com! Here, geeks (forthwith known as "adherents") of pop culture can bask in the minutiae of their (well, my) favorite TV shows, movies, comic books, music, statuary, tapestries, and cosmic tripping. Well maybe not those last few, but who knows?"

The site started as Tyrannosaurus Lex (as in lexicon) around 1998, a site that was devoted to the two Saturday morning TV series called *Land of the Lost* which first aired from 1974-1976 and 1991-1992, respectively. Both series are about a family that gets trapped in a world filled with dinosaurs, strange beings, and bizarre technology. I originally had planned for the site to be a showcase for *Land of the Lost* fan fiction and I had grandiose designs for my own fan fiction timeline of stories that would weave in between the shows' episodes, then continue on past the two shows' final seasons. In prepping the roadmap of my own stories set in the Land, I found I wanted to be able to take advantage of the more minute details of the episodes, their "proper" chronology, etc., so I started re-watching them and taking notes. As I started accumulating pages and pages of notes, I reflected they were kind of like Cliffs Notes of a TV show! So, why

not make them available to my internet readers? I started out calling them "Notes on Episodes" (catchy, eh?), but soon a friend on a *Land of the Lost* email list commented on how well he enjoyed my "episode studies" and I started using the term on the site. After several years, I was accumulating positive reactions on those studies and decided to branch out to studies beyond *Land of the Lost*, and PopApostle was born.

It was a while before I got around to adding *Buckaroo Banzai* to the list. If my notes on website updates are to be trusted, I first started on *V*, *Cliffhangers*, *Jurassic Park*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Tron*, *The Thing*, and *Total Recall*. I believe it was when Moonstone Books announced in 2011 that it would soon be publishing an ongoing BB comic book series that I figured it was time to add him to the studies. (That ongoing series never materialized, by the way so, no, you didn't miss it.)

I set all my series studies in chronological order of the stories as much as I can determine it. Some series are more difficult than others to resolve into chronologies, for example, *Battlestar Galactica*, which had TV episodes, original novels, comic books, and comic strips, none of which adhered to a common continuity! It was as if each medium told stories from their own parallel universe of *Galactica*. Some other TV series even aired episodes in seemingly random order, so I could not even take the original air dates as a reliable chronology (see PopApostle's pages on *Land of the Lost*

season one, *UFO*, and soon to come *Space: 1999*). *Buckaroo Banzai* did not present too much trouble in that regard, being there is only one movie (with accompanying novelization and two-issue Marvel Comics adaptation), a small handful of comic book stories published by Moonstone Books, and the official sequel novel by Banzai's creator, Earl Mac Rauch. Many of the BB stories are quite clear about where they are meant to fall in relation to the movie *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*, though they were not necessarily published in that order.

The story called "A Tomb with a View" appears in a one-shot comic called *Buckaroo Banzai: Origins* and features Buckaroo as a boy. This is clearly the first standalone story in the BB chronology thus far presented. "Of Hunan Bondage" was presented in the two-issue mini-series *Buckaroo Banzai: The Prequel*. The mini-series title identifies it outright as a prequel to the movie.

The Moonstone stories that are follow-ups to the movie are less obvious in placement, but still not too difficult. Largely, these have been placed in publication order. "The Love That Hath No Name" appeared *The Phantom Double Shot: KGB Noir #3*, a split-book published in 2010 that features a Phantom story and a BB story. I think I wanted to place this "smaller" tale as a palate cleanser between the two sprawling adventures *Across the 8th Dimension* and 2010's two-issue mini-series *Buckaroo Banzai: The Hardest of the Hard*, which introduces the

character known as Lady Gillette, who then goes on to appear as a full-fledged member of Team Banzai in...2006's three-part "Return of the Screw". The next story, "Christmas Corral", appeared in 2007's *Moonstone's Holiday Super Spectacular*. I don't recall now exactly why I placed this story here, but it may be that I felt that Lady G's two aforementioned (2010 and 2006) adventures should be conjoined in the chronology and not have "Christmas Corral" jammed in the middle. And the remaining stories stick with the publications dates: "Wild Asses of the Kush" from the *Buckaroo Banzai Big Size* one-shot, "Mysterium" from Moonstone's crossover mini-series of their licensed properties, *Phases of the Moon*, the two-issue *Tears of a Clone*, and the novel *Against the World Crime League Et Al.*, published in 2009, 2011, 2012, and 2021, respectively. The BB stories themselves are resplendent with inconsistencies, contradictions, continuity errors, etc. In the "Unanswered Questions" section of my study of *Across the 8th Dimension*, I simply wrote, "Too many to list." For the other properties studied on PopApostle, I generally try to find a way to reconcile the contradictions with some kind of argument that explains how the error is not really an error, *a la* Marvel Comics' No-Prize rules. But the Buckaruniverse is a different kind of beast, seeing as how BB creator Rauch has taken a metatextual approach to his universe, i.e. the movie and novels are suggested to be merely fictionalized versions of actual events.



In the audio commentary of the movie *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*, director W.D. Richter and “the real Reno” say the film they made is a docudrama based on the real-life adventures of Buckaroo Banzai (which, incidentally, means Peter Weller’s face is just Peter Weller’s face, not Buckaroo’s!). The novelization of the screenplay is also written as if it’s an account of the real world adventures of Banzai and his crew by Reno. Pinky Carruther’s Unknown Facts subtitle track on the movie DVD suggests the book was ghostwritten by Reno for his friend, Earl Mac Rauch, as a favor to appease a legal dispute, while the novel *Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League Et Al.* is written by Earl Mac Rauch as told to him by Reno! As I commented in the study of that second novel, who’s the actual professional writer here?? Then again, ever notice that Reno and Rauch are never in the same room at the same time? But I digress.

So, any inconsistencies in the stories are the fault of the various creatives involved, or are due to the need to not reveal confidential details of the heroes and the events in which they participate. While I do point out the discrepancies between stories, I haven’t tried too hard to reconcile them. Maybe someday I’ll score an interview with the real Buckaroo (or at least Reno) and get the lowdown on what Team Banzai’s adventures were really all about! The metatextualism of the Buckaruniverse also makes determining the definitive version of adventures that are told in two different ways, such as the *Across the 8th Dimension* movie and novel, difficult. Neither is exactly “canon” if they’re considered just adaptations of real adventures. It would be interesting to have “the real Buckaroo” sit down and do serious annotations of the movie, novels, and comics, and point out what was changed from reality, which elements are things he can’t discuss due to government (or Team Banzai) confidentially agreements, and so forth. Possibly he could point out that these fictionalized versions are deliberately camped up a bit and that the reality of these adventures was much more alarming, and we can only hope that humanity is up to the grim challenges to come in the future.

Speaking of definitive versions, this brings us to two separate stories that purport to reveal the resurrection of Dr. Emilio Lizardo/Lord John Whorfin and the introduction of Whorfin’s spawn, i.e. the three-issue “Return of the Screw” comic book and *Buckaroo*

Banzai Against the World Crime League novel. The two adventures are very different other than that, so I take them as just that, two separate adventures. Again, since none of these retellings of “real world” adventures can exactly qualify as “canon”, Rauch and Reno are free to take elements of one adventure and mix it into another. So, while the return of Lizardo/Whorfin can likely be considered canon, there are two different artistic interpretations of it, both containing elements of truth, but neither quite being fact. In *Against the World Crime League*, Reno quips that what he writes may be closer to Homeric legend than history. This may explain some of the contradictions between this novel and previous BB adventures. In the opening chapter of the book, Buckaroo himself says he believes in something like the Buddhist notion of a living, vibrating universe that permits absurdities and even contradictions.

This latest BB adventure was a challenge to read and annotate; a long novel with multiple annotations required for most of its pages. It was similar to doing my study of the book *The Secret History of Twin Peaks*, which required lots of annotations, but that book was, frankly, more fun to read. *Against the World Crime League* was bit of a slog to get through. Before this novel, I had traditionally read through an entire novel, making notes of page numbers and the terms, events, dates, etc. that I wanted to annotate in the later study. After finishing a novel, I would then sit down at the computer and go through the notes page-by-page,

typing out my thoughts, looking up meanings of terminology, researching historical events, etc. But, about a quarter of the way through *Against the World Crime League*, aggravated at constantly have to stop to make a note, I decided I would read the book only at my computer and just immediately do the research and type out my annotations in the PopApostle format as I came to each one during the reading. This took a few months, as the book is quite dense with references! In writing up my studies, notes on past BB canon mostly come from my own memory of the stories and confirming with the source material, past PopApostle studies or, at times, with the [Buckaroo Banzai Wiki](#) (though the wiki is rather thin compared to many other franchise wikis). Research of real world topics is accomplished largely by lookups on Wikipedia, Google Search, various reference sites, and occasionally my own library of books. I have learned some interesting things about our real world through my pop culture studies, including from the oeuvre of Buckaroo Banzai, such as: the Long March, a massive year-long military retreat in 1934-35 by China's Red Army, led by Mao Zedong, from the Kuomintang Army of General Chaing Kai-shek; Potemkin villages; MATLAB (matrix laboratory) programming language, which can crunch numbers in multi-dimensional arrays; Kashmir Shaivism; Minkowski space; Soviet "brain perversion techniques"; Friedrich Engels, a German philosopher who co-wrote the Communist Manifesto with Karl Marx; Jung's concept of the Spirit Mercurius; the Yaddo artists-colony-

cum-think tank; Bacon's *Novum organum*; Thucydides traps; the secret pyramids of Bosnia; and Malthusism, among others.

 While writing this little essay, I was set to thinking about yet another possible metatextual level: Are the stories of Buckaroo Banzai simply made up by Reno, *a la* the books detailing interactions with Yaqui shaman Don Juan by American anthropologist Carlos Castaneda? Is BB a huge scam? Reno propping himself up through the alleged exploits of one Dr. Banzai, a superman who does not exist? Earlier in this essay, I quoted Dr. Banzai as saying we live in a living, vibrating universe that permits absurdities and contradictions. Dr. Castaneda described himself as living with a principle of freedom from personal history, and, when confronted by a journalist about the discrepancies in his accounts of Don Juan and his world(s), he responded: "To ask me to verify my life by giving you my statistics...is like using science to validate sorcery. It robs the world of its magic and makes milestones out of us all." Many scholars believe that Yaqui shaman Don Juan is an amalgam of odd characters Castaneda met during his explorations in Mexico. *Et tu*, Banzai?



Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #4,329: The contents of the briefcase that BB carried with him on the Jet Car are the Overthruster, Albert Einstein's brain*, and a tuna sandwich.

*Much as Sir James 'Black' Douglas vowed to carry out Robert The Bruce's dying wish to have his heart buried in Jerusalem, Buckaroo Banzai carried Albert Einstein's brain with him during the fateful Jet Car run through solid matter. It was, after all, Einstein who worked on Project Rainbow, the original time-space window experiment back in 1943. Otherwise known as the infamous Philadelphia Experiment. The test either went spectacularly haywire or never happened, depending upon who you choose to believe. Basing his work upon the Unified Field Theory, which posits that gravity and magnetism are connected in the same way as mass and energy, Einstein sought to send a US Navy vessel, the Eldridge, through a time vortex. Judging by the alleged results, he only partially succeeded. Many of the ship's crew were left imbedded in solid matter, others went insane. Einstein confessed to never fully solving the theory, but to judge by the success of the Oscillation Overthruster, Dr. Banzai did – although he unfailingly acknowledged his debt to Einstein, whose papers at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies served as Buckaroo's primer on the Unified Field Theory. It was therefore in tribute to the great man that Buckaroo decided to take along Einstein's preserved brain during the Jet Car test run through solid matter.

Los Angeles For New Jersey: Visiting
The Public Shooting Locations of
***The Adventures of Buckaroo
Banzai***

By Rich “FilmBuff” Drees

If you live long enough in any one place, you start to see changes to buildings and neighborhoods over time. But with film, that is the opposite. Places depicted in your favorite movies are preserved in celluloid amber exactly how they looked - or at least how they were set dressed - at the time.

So when tracking down some of the public exterior locations used for ***The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai: Across The 8th Dimension***, it is nice to know that many are still very much recognizable as of the Summer of 2024. Just make sure that you are on the right coast. While the film is mostly set in New Jersey, it was shot almost entirely in southern California, including a number of exterior locations that a vacationing fan can visit.

Now obviously, there are a number of locations that are complete no-gos for fans for a variety of reasons. The interior of the Banzai Institute was a private home, and Lizardo's room at the Home for the Criminally Insane was actually shot at the Brentwood V.A. Hospital, to name just two examples. But there are still a

number of other spots waiting for adventurous Blue Blaze Irregulars to stop on by. So let's saddle up and get on the tour bus for five docudrama filming locations that one can visit while on a trip to Los Angeles.



SPARC Building

New Brunswick Jail/ SPARC
685 N. Venice Blvd., Venice, CA
90291

Set at an angle off of Venice Boulevard just a few blocks from famed Venice Beach sits an unassuming community arts center that fans will certainly recognize. Now the home of SPARC, the Social and Public Art Resource Center, the building was used as the exterior of the New Brunswick Jail where Dr Zweibel rendezvous with Team Banzai and gets his callsign of New Jersey. Additionally, the interior served as the jail cells where Buckaroo meets up with Penny Priddy the morning after she interrupted the Hong Kong Cavaliers' performance at Artey's Artery.

Outside of the expected change in signage and some mural painting, the exterior location looks pretty much the same as it did in the film. The one major exception is where the art deco light scones have been replaced with somewhat more utilitarian light fixtures. The surrounding grounds have also been more heavily landscaped since the filming. Inside, there are still some of the jail cells as part of the gallery's main exhibit hall.



SPARC Building - comparison

The location wasn't always home to the non-profit arts and culture organization, though. Built in 1929, the art deco building served as the home for the Venice Division of the Los Angeles Police Department until the early 1970s, with SPARC taking it over in 1977. Before SPARC moved in, John Carpenter used the building for his modernization of Howard Hawks's ***Rio Bravo***, ***Assault on Precinct 13***, released the year earlier.

Interestingly, looking at a production document dated May 16, 1983 and reprinted in the [Spring 1990 issue of *World Watch One*](#), the original location chosen for the jail was the Harbor Jail on S. Beacon Street in San Pedro. It is unknown as to why the location switched.

Traveler Tip: Check the [SPARC website](#) for their hours of operation if you want to go inside and see the publicly accessible jail cells as well as take in the artwork on display in their main gallery.

Millennium Biltmore Hotel
506 S Grand St, Los Angeles

A stunningly beautiful hotel that opened in 1923 in Downtown Los Angeles, the Millennium Biltmore served as the shooting location for the post-jet car test news conference as well as Professor Hikita's kidnapping and subsequent chase through the service corridors that culminates with Buckaroo stealing a Harley Davidson. While sometimes sequences like these can be shot in a number of locations and pieced together via movie magic, this whole sequence was shot on the Millennium Biltmore's premises.



Biltmore Service Ramp

Since it is still an operating hotel, some access may be restricted for non-guests. So trying to see the ballroom/news conference location and the service corridors is mostly out of the question. However, the service ramp that we see Buckaroo run up just prior to his hopping on the Harley is open to the public, as the top of the ramp empties out onto Olive Street.

At the top of the ramp, Buckaroo does a quick (and unseen in the movie) u-turn that puts him heading up to the Biltmore's old VIP Entrance, in front of which is the Harley Davidson tractor-trailer off-loading motorcycles for an upcoming convention. This area, which stretches the entire width of the hotel, starting at Olive Street all the way to South Grand, is sometimes blocked off at each end. However, it is accessible through the Hotel's Grand Galleria.

If one is accessing the VIP entrance area from the inside of the Hotel, it is at the opposite end of the Grand Galleria from the West Fifth Street entrance. (That particular entrance is probably best known as the entrance to the "Sedgwick Hotel" in ***Ghostbusters***.) Approaching the Entrance from within the Hotel, one will see on your right the stairs that go down to the Biltmore Bowl, a nightclub which was billed as the largest in the world when the Hotel opened. The exterior of the VIP Entrance as seen in ***TABB*** can also be seen in Chinatown in a very similar camera setup.

(In the interest of disclosure I should note that your humble correspondent stayed at the Biltmore on my recent trip to Los Angeles, so I did not have an issue crossing the Galleria and accessing the VIP Entrance area.)



Biltmore VIP Entrance

With the Biltmore's ground floor reconfigured somewhat in the early 1990s, guests now mainly enter through the South Grand Street side where the car park/parking valet now resides as opposed to entering through the hotel's original lobby, now known as the Rendezvous Court, on the Olive Street side. (This lobby can be seen in both ***Beverly Hills Cop*** and ***Bachelor Party*** in its original form.) The new lobby was the former Music Room which itself has a long history from presidential candidate John F. Kennedy using it for his campaign headquarters during the 1960 Democratic convention being held in Los Angeles that year to being the space where the ***Ghostbusters*** chased and trapped a certain green ghost. (And although Slimer supposedly was haunting the twelfth floor of the "Sedgwick Hotel" in the movie, the Biltmore only has eleven floors.)

The Biltmore has a place in film history that extends back all the way to May 1927. The newly founded Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was holding a luncheon in the Crystal Ballroom when MGM head honcho Louis B Meyer suggested the idea of holding some sort of annual awards for movie making excellence. According to Hollywood legend, as Meyer was pitching his idea, MGM art director Cedric Gibbons took a linen napkin and sketched out what the award

could look like, essentially designing the Academy Award statue at that moment. The Academy would go on to host a number of early Academy Award ceremonies at the Biltmore. And the hotel has served as a location for numerous films and television starting primarily in the 1980s after the building had undergone a massive \$135 million restoration in the late 1970s.



Mount Hollywood Tunnel

Mount Hollywood Tunnel
Mt Hollywood Dr, Griffith Park

After Buckaroo steals the Harley, it takes just a quick edit to get him almost 9½ miles away to Griffith Park and its famous Mt Hollywood Tunnel. Located just a short walk down from [Griffith Observatory](#), this is the tunnel where we see both the Yoyodyne Van and Buckaroo emerge from in their chase. If the tunnel looks familiar, that's because it has shown up in a number of films and television shows such as ***Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*** as the entrance to ***Toon Town***, ***Barton Fink*** and ***Back To The Future, Part II*** among many others.

If you approach and enter the Tunnel coming up North Vermont Canyon Rd, you will exit it in the same direction that the Yoyodyne van and Buckaroo did in the film. (The lightpost that can be seen briefly in the shot of Buckaroo circling on the motorcycle is the giveaway here.) Immediately on your right will be the start of some hiking trails that lead through the park. Parking is available either straight ahead, a couple of hundred yards up West Observatory Road at Griffith Observatory itself, or along the side of Western Canyon Road. The Observatory itself is a treat for movie fans to visit as it has served as the location for a number of films including most famously ***Rebel Without A Cause*** and ***The Rocketeer***.

Traveler Tip One: Both roads leading up the mountain to the Observatory are a bit winding, and at certain spots, somewhat lacking in guardrails, especially coming up the Western Canyon Road side. If you have a fear of heights you may want someone else to handle the driving up the mountain.

Traveler Tip Two: Check both Observatory and the nearby [Greek Theatre websites](#) to make sure that there aren't events going on the day you wish to visit as that could

impact the amount of traffic and available parking.



Institute Exterior

Banzai Institute
609 E Channel Rd, Santa Monica

Nestled in a cozy Santa Monica neighborhood lies a private home that was used for the exterior of the Banzai Institute. Although the fencing and gates seen in the movie were added by the production, the posts of the front gates and the tall hedge stretching along the border of the property next to the street are still recognizable today.



Institute Gates

Built in 1932, the home sits on a sprawling 3.3 acre plot of land, reportedly the largest home property in Santa Monica. The home was also

used as the location for Victor Maitlin's mansion in **Beverly Hills Cop's** climactic shootout. Just up the sidewalk from the main vehicle gate is the smaller wooden gate that Eddie Murphy picks the lock of in that film. Additionally, episodes of the TV series **Dynasty**, **Mannix**, and **SWAT** have also shot at this location.

The Banzai Institute gate scenes is another one of those locations listed as initially set for shooting elsewhere on that May 1983 production document. In this case, Descanso Gardens in Flintridge, northeast of Los Angeles would have served as the location. Again, there is no word as to why the production changed locations for the shoot.

For any Blue Blaze Irregulars who wish to own this particular piece of the film, you better have deep pockets. According to Zillow, the last time the property was on the market back in 2021 it sold for \$48.6 million.

Traveler Tip: This is a private residence so do respect the privacy of the owner and the neighborhood if you wish to visit and exercise discretion when taking photographs.



Courtesy of Rich Drees

Sepulveda Dam

Perhaps the Holy Grail location for a Blue Blaze Irregular to visit, the Sepulveda Dam is the location where the film's closing "Banzai March" segment for the closing credits was filmed. Visible from both the 405 and the 101 just 100 yards north from where the two highways intersect, the dam has also been seen in John Carpenter's **Escape From New York** as the gates to the island prison of Manhattan as well as a number of other films, television programs, and music videos.

Built in 1941 by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Dam is located just beyond the southern boundary of the [Sepulveda Basin Recreation Zone](#). Both of the **TABB** and **Escape From New York** scenes were filmed on the Dam's southern side on the large concrete area. The north side of the dam is dirt and scrub grass.

Traveler Tip: We have not been able to ascertain definitively if the area around the Dam is indeed open to the public. It has been restricted in the past. However, when your correspondent visited the area this past June, the only specific signage appeared to warn against trespassing along the top of the dam itself. While there I saw numerous other people walking (and in one case, riding a dirt bike) along both sides of the dam and along the earthen dike that stretches off of the dam's east side.

Traveler Tip Two: If you do wish to visit the dam, you will need to hike a short bit to get to the location. While there are some trails, they still cut through some brush, so long pants or jeans alongside some good hiking boots and bug repellent are advised.



Sepulveda Dam Comparison



Blue Blaze Irregular FilmBuff is living the dream.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,506: Rawhide's fave song: "Anything ending with a C note."

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #43,901: Rawhide is an accomplished astronomer, but dropped out of university shortly before getting his degree.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #33,9800: I made up one of these facts, but maybe this is the one.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,523: Hikita's fave thing: "Any game of chance".



Dancing with the Giants

Genesis of the Yard Sign

By David “Dogberry” Jackson

It started with a flub.

Worry gnawed at me as I ruminated on dark matter, a leftover topic from my last-minute rendezvous with Buffalo Jo. She was taking a well-deserved break from her work at CAMS [Center for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry -ed.] to surf the Caribbean pipeline for a couple of weeks and rang me out of nowhere, asking to meet her in Denver. I dropped what I was doing and found an open runway. For an unexpected afternoon, she indulged my nerdy chatter over gourmet banana splits and shade-grown Colombian grind (Seems her fascination with WIMPs extends beyond the lab.). As she hailed a car — phone glued to her ear — she tossed a question my way: “What was that you said about liquid xenon?” We checked into a nearby hotel, and I filled her in.

It was a welcome diversion. Her off-hand speculation that some entities are simply attracted to specific energy signatures was a scintillating trifle. And I got a particular charge out of her energetic riff on alternate reality. Something about mineral estate law and a “weft in the fabric” as we know it? Maybe you had to be there, but it was worth a chuckle. Little did I know, Jo’s parting quip

would echo ominously some ten months later, during my nights filling in for Shortsox on patrol with the Shuji Terayama Memorial Canine Unit.

Can matter comprised of super-symmetrical particles be owned as property? John Emdall had suggested as much. At the time, the implications sailed over my head, however. Similarly enigmatic was Rawhide’s lecture at CERN, where he alluded to escalating diplomatic tensions arising from transdimensional claim-jumping. The nuance of his portent evaded me. If only I’d grasped the gravity of it all in the moment. If only I had known then what I would this night:

It was a Tuesday. Spotting a subtle anomaly, a detachment of BBI satellite imagery specialists had flagged suspicious activity in a mixed-class Northside residential district the previous weekend. Albeit weak, the artifact seemed to bear a connection to the Valencia incident. Naturally, low frequency papal correlations once again reverberated in the background. We were sent to investigate. ...

Pinky Carruthers’ Unknown Fact #42,109: Peter Weller’s father was a helicopter pilot.

The neighborhood was eerily quiet. It being a little after solstice, multicolored electric candles flickered in darkened windows. My footfalls echoed between frosty alleyway fences, where overflowing trash and recycling bins loitered like hungover partygoers. The five spunky Malinois at my hip, exquisitely self-disciplined thanks to their samurai training, held their scent-driven curiosity in check. Yet Buffalo Jo's hoarse whisper kept intruding: "Remember," she murmured, "Everywhere you are, you matter."

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,381: Billy Travers' Pet Peeve: "firewalls". Sadly, he was arrested for 'freelance hacking' his way into the FBI's files on Monica Lewinsky and is still serving the remainder of his sentence.

What did she mean? I couldn't shake it. Had I heard that before? Was it an obscure relic from our guided dream studies together? Had she stolen a peek at my transcripts? Or was it a cryptic warning? A precautionary theoretical hiccup, perhaps? Jo was dark too, of course. Not that way, the other way. And I wouldn't want her any other.

My throat clenched dryly. A neglected shamble of tires and

broken railroad ties in a lot overgrown by thorny weeds might have alerted me that the place was an enemy bivouac, had I not been lost in reverie. The stench of garbage mingled with the cloying ozone sweetness of a burned-out H-O transformer, a sickly perfume that clung to my skin like curried skunk fat. Or was it decaying scandium? A forgotten melody flitted through my brain — a rhapsodic moment with Jo under a canopy of stars, her breathless gasps a staccato counterpoint to the sustain of the thundering surf. A fragile oasis in the encroaching darkness. It felt a lifetime ago.

Suddenly, a low growl rumbled beside me. Squad Leader Ajax — quickly regaining his professional cool — nudged my hand with his cold, damp nose. Holding a deep breath, I tightened my grip on the reins and crept forward, shadows dancing at the periphery of my headlamp's beam. Two pairs of glowing eyes glinted warily from beneath the dump's attic fascia, appearing under my red rays like hyperthyroidic terrapins. Evil. Pure and simple. My heart hammered against my ribs. This wasn't just another patrol. The fates of entwined worlds might depend on what happened next. The bitter taste of past failures revisited like hotdog reflux. I swallowed hard and waved Ajax to advance the troops.

Shortsox later confessed to me privately that in haste to pack his acoustic theremin for that unscheduled trip to Antarctica, he had failed to file the report which mine would that Wednesday have otherwise corroborated. “Valencia was patty-cake,” it cautioned. But instead, when relayed to the Board, mine was met with cautious skepticism. So after a day or two of executive review, and because Boston would be away for another several weeks, I was tasked to engineer a lure by which the uncouth agents would be motivated to out themselves — as they are known to do either by impudent acts of vandalism or by their feverishly idiomatic one-fingered salute.

The requirements were few. It had to be stealthy, and there was little budget to support it. In a dazzling display of institutional efficiency, we acquired a neighboring house and set up 24-hour surveillance.

Pinky Carruthers’ Unknown Fact #8,490: Mrs. Johnson’s Pet Peeve: “Watches costing more than my car”.

I kept hoping Jo would call between those monster barrels at Tres Palmas. I wanted to ask what she meant. To tell how her purrs invade

not just my dreams but my waking life as well. But I guess the beast outscored her this time. That’s the story out of Livermore, anyway.

IN THIS HOUSE WE BELIEVE
HOME IS WHERE YOU WEAR YOUR HAT
THE FUTURE BEGINS TOMORROW
WE DON'T HAVE TO BE MEAN · I CAN DANCE
YES ON ONE AND NO ON TWO
CHARACTER IS WHAT YOU ARE IN THE DARK
YOU'RE PERFECT · LAUGH WHILE YOU CAN
NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, THERE YOU ARE

Courtesy of David Jackson

Blue Blaze Irregulars are encouraged to place signs in areas they suspect to be infiltrated, then observe from cover at a safe distance. Radio HQ, ready to provide your coordinates.

File Access:

ko-fi.com/s/49efa3ce34

The idea of the yard sign was first floated by an Advisory Committee member whose name either I don’t remember or am obligated to protect — that’s yours to guess. Regardless, the suggestion took hold as a means to preemptively proclaim the host territory as the dominion of our allies first heralded by the late John Valuk. But when a preliminary presentation suffered a fatal punctuational omission, that most pointed first fragment was scuttled

altogether. The rest of the text was designed to daze a hostile onlooker by declaring contradictory credos in equal balance, facilitating capture.

Be safe out there. And remember:
Anywhere you are, you're matter.

My report follows.

— BBI Dogberry

**Urgent Threat –
Potential Red Lectroid
Activity – Portland, Oregon**

Classification:
NOFORN – URGENT

Transmission Origin:
BBI DOGBERRY, STMCU PRO
TEMPORE

Transmission Recipient:
TEAM BANZAI

Message:

This is a high-priority transmission regarding a potential Red Lectroid threat to global security in Portland, Oregon.

Details:

Unconfirmed reports suggest a RL encampment may have been sighted in residential north Portland, near [REDACTED]. The timeframe for this sighting is estimated to be [REDACTED].

Importance:

RL pose a significant threat to planetary security. Their presence necessitates

immediate response and investigation.

Requested Action:

Verification: Dispatch a contingency of Irregular forces to the specified location ([REDACTED]) to confirm the presence or absence of RL activity.

Containment:

If RL presence is confirmed, establish a quarantine perimeter around the affected area following established containment protocols.

Neutralization:

Prepare Rugsuckers for potential RL neutralization, prioritizing civilian safety.

Information Sharing:

Disseminate this information to all relevant planetary security agencies within the jurisdiction.

TRANSMISSION END

PS. I compose this at the FBO as I await clearance on a spontaneous flight to SIG, sipping a familiar cocktail of anticipation and dread. I hold in my hand a photo postcard depicting Christmas at Ghirardelli Square, postmarked this week in San Leandro. But that cocoa line pointing to Livermore is of less interest to me than the three palm trees in near mid-ground at the right edge of the frame! *Jo lives.* And I must learn the reasons behind her silence. More later. ■

What's That Headband Doing

There? A same-but-different memory,
By Terry J. "Silver Fox" Erdmann

Previously, on *World Watch One*:

Most of you, I'm sure, have heard the story of how I became the luckiest guy ever. It was a case, I realize, of being in the right place at the right time. Which doesn't make sense to me, because you are where you are when you are, and, well, there I was.

Not that I'm complaining.

You know how it went. The Twentieth Century Fox marketing department was tasked with promoting a movie that had been produced elsewhere. The problem was that no one really understood the thing, and some actively disliked it. So after an in-house screening and some aborted campaign discussion, someone mentioned science fiction "fan conventions."

At the time, I was but a lowly secretary, happily answering phones and typing press notes. One fateful afternoon, the executives realized that they could duplicate what Lucasfilm had done during the *Star Wars* campaigns, and transport "one of us" to those gatherings. Looking around among the cubicle flunkies, an exec smiled, recalled that I'd

often opined that I loved to travel, and beckoned, "Oh, Terry..."

I never saw it coming, and certainly couldn't have expected that it never would go away... but here I am, forty years later, still talking about *Buckaroo Banzai* (no bloody "The Adventures of," or "Beyond the Eighth Dimension").

So I went on the road, spent my weekends among throngs of the countless greatest people I'd ever meet, and handed out, one at a time, 35,000 headbands (give or take a few hundred).

You knew that already. Now here's a part--actually two parts--that you don't know. They've just never come up until now.

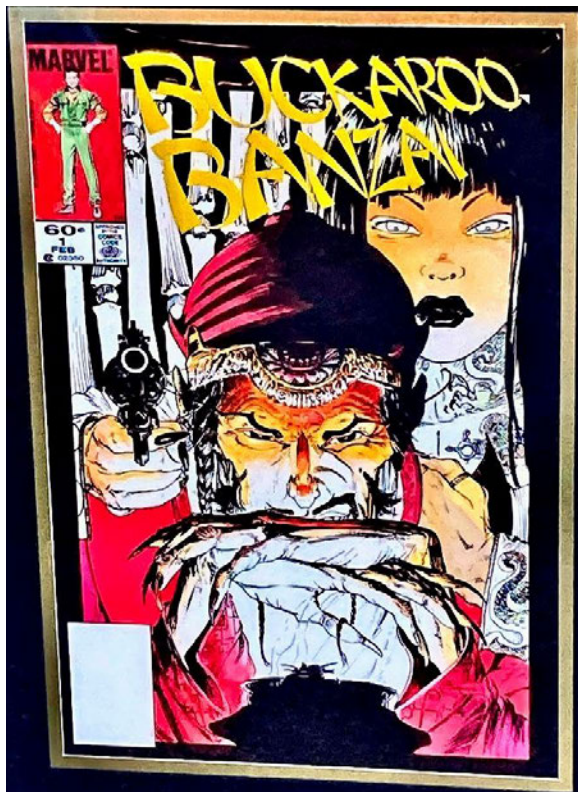
While Steve Mattsson was prepping this issue of *World Watch One*, we were talking and I happened to mention that I have the original, screen-worn headband hanging on my living room wall. Surprised and inspired, Steve suggested that an explanation and photo would be appreciated.



Courtesy of Terry Erdmann

Several days later, I was texting with *BB* superfan Jim Van

Over, Sr. (see *Star Trek* credits), and he wrote “Wherever Mike Kaluta’s original Banzai comic book art is, it’s priceless for two fandoms.” I wrote back, “It’s hanging in my living room.” He responded, “speechless,” too shocked, apparently, for punctuation.



Courtesy of Terry Erdmann

Yes, I have both of them. Don’t be surprised. I said at the top of this column that I was the luckiest guy ever, didn’t I?

When that mountain of headbands landed on me for distribution, the movie-worn original, which the sewers had used as their production template (Really!), came back with them. I happily flashed it around the

department, but no one particularly responded. It was wrinkly. And stained. So I had it dry-cleaned and framed, at my expense, because as a secretary I had no discernable budget outside of travel. Then I took it to conventions, displayed it during my slide-show talks, and about a year later, rather than toss it like so much studio flotsam or jetsam, I just... well, took it home.

Similarly, I had found the original comic book art tossed onto a shelf in a corner of the department. I pointed it out, asked permission and, again, had it framed for the road, where it greatly enhanced the presentation. Many of you saw it. Your “oohs,” and “aahs” were wonderful. In fact, one weekend I happened to meet artist Mike Kaluta, and when I showed him the piece he said, sadly, “If I’d known they were going to have it colored, I’d have done it myself.” A not-so-gentle reminder, my friends, that movie production is done by committee.

Thinking about it, it’s a shame that I also hadn’t come upon the long-missing Jet Car, although, in truth, I really doubt that I have space for it to hang in my living room.



Courtesy of Tom Southwell

Portland, OR Screening Report

By Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson

This summer, 40th Anniversary screenings of ***The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*** are scheduled nationwide. The first occurred on June 3rd in my hometown of Portland, OR.

The [Hollywood Theater](#) is within walking distance of my house. It is a wonderful theater committed to presenting movies on film. (They paid to have their pristine 70mm print of ***2001: A Space Odyssey*** struck and show it twice a year.)



Courtesy of Rainbow Kitty

When I saw ***Buckaroo Banzai*** there in 2016 and 2022, it was presented in 35mm. This year, the format was [DCP](#) (Digital Cinema Package). Why the change? Over forty theaters are

screening ***Buckaroo*** this summer, and there are not many 35mm prints available.

My wife, BBI Crimson Cat, and I arrived early to beat the crowd in the Hollywood's largest auditorium. It has a 50' screen and 384 seats. I saved our spots while she got us beers, an IPA for her and a lager for me. As the theater filled, I saw a colleague from work. He asked me if I had seen the movie before and I pointed to my "Hong Kong Cavaliers" t-shirt. He gave me a mock bow and went in search of a seat.

An MC asked how many in the audience had never seen the film. A scant few raised their hands. The MC gave a nice intro to the movie, but repeated the myth that ***Big Trouble in Little China*** was initially intended to be a sequel to ***Buckaroo***. He then raffled off a [jean jacket](#) with the [Buckaroo Banzai](#) logo airbrushed on the back.



Artwork by Matt Stanger

The film started with a "Park Circus" logo that faded into the MGM lion.

Park Circus? What's that?

Apparently, it's an international film distribution company.

The audience applauded the **BB** logo as it appeared on screen. They shouted, "Woo hoo!" as the credits for Peter Weller, John Lithgow, Ellen Barkin, and Jeff Goldblum appeared. There were lesser woo hoos for Christopher Lloyd and the rest of the cast. Crimson Cat and I were the only ones who woo hoo'd for Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter, but we don't regret it.

Even though most of the audience has seen **Buckaroo** before, nobody laughed at the "Sined, Seeled, Delivered" bit. There were big laughs for "Laugh-a while you can, Monkey Boy!" and the Drummer with an Uzi.

The biggest laughs came when the humor was allowed to build. For example, when the Secretary of Defense says, "I'm sure you guys didn't come here to hear me talk." And Perfect Tommy says, "You're right." Big laugh. Then, the Secretary unplugs Tommy's microphone. Even bigger laugh. Another example is when New Jersey asks, "Why is there a watermelon there?" Big laugh. Then Reno says, "I'll tell you later." Huge laugh.

Later in the film, "DECLARATION OF WAR: The Short Form," Scooter pocketing the \$20 bill, and "So

what? Big deal" were crowd favorites.

As the *End Credits March* started, the audience began clapping in time and cheered each time a new character joined the group.

There was a final round of applause as the film faded to black.

Overheard on the way out of the theater, a male voice, "Do you feel inspired?" A female voice, "I feel inspired." Us too, female voice. Us too.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #38,209: Before joining the institute, Perfect Tommy once escaped from prison and evaded capture by posing as a Belgian and joining the Foreign Legion.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #69: NICE!

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #6,325: The first scene of Buckaroo Banzai was shot at the Lakeview Medical Center on Monday, July 12, 1983.



Comic-Con International Screening Report

By Steve “Rainbow Kitty” Mattsson

Film screenings have been an integral part of science fiction and comic book conventions since their inception. The 16mm versions of **King Kong** and **Flash Gordon** serials played at cons were often the only way fans could see these classics. In the time of streaming, however, film programs at cons are more of a tradition than a need.

Regardless, the film program at [Comic-Con in San Diego](#) was first-rate. On Wednesday night, fans had a chance to catch **Barbenheimer** (the **Barbie/Oppenheimer** double feature). Thursday featured **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai** and several DnD-themed movies. Some of my other favorite films on the schedule were **A Boy & his Dog** and **Dark Star**. The Con’s program ended with a midnight showing of **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** on Saturday. (**Rocky Horror** holds my record for the movie seen most times in a theater.)

The **Buckaroo** screening was not well attended, but nearly all fans were staunch Blue Blaze Irregulars, wearing Buckaroo Banzai t-shirts. The two, not wearing shirts, were members of Gen Z, who had heard how great the movie was, but knew very little about it. (How I envied

them and what they were about to experience.)

Before the film started, I passed out Buckaroo badge ribbons (Thank you, Brian “BBI Gumball” Hunt) and Team Banzai pins. This was met with much appreciation.



Courtesy of Rainbow Kitty

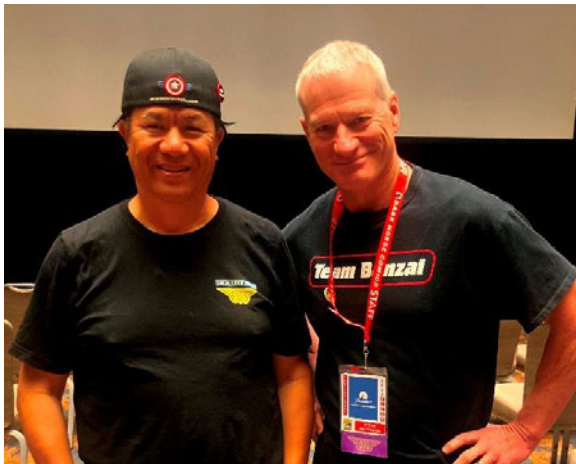
I also took time to plug this 40th Anniversary issue of *World Watch One*. If anybody from the audience is reading this,

“Saddle up! We’re on the clock.”

Shortly after the film started, one more fan joined the audience. He was wearing a cool custom Buckaroo shirt and with good reason. He was BBI Rollo Tomassi, a *World Watch One* colleague I had never met. Rollo has recreated designs for classic Buckaroo shirts,

like the Team Banzai one I wore.
Check out Rollo's BB merch [here](#).

When the movie ended, the Gen Z-ers exclaimed, "Thank you for initiating us into the cult of **Buckaroo Banzai!**" I started to explain to them that despite **Buckaroo** being called a "cult classic," the "C" word is offensive to some, and we prefer the term "Blue Blaze Irregular." Unfortunately they didn't hear, as they were late to their next panel, signing, gaming session, or whatever.



Rollo Tomasi and Rainbow Kitty in San Diego, CA

Rollo and I walked back to the convention floor, discussing how being a Blue Blaze Irregular differs from being in a cult.

It does, doesn't it?

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #1,429: Next to Buckaroo, Mrs. Johnson has the biggest keyring at the Institute.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #9,528: Perfect Tommy's pet peeve: women with Adam's apples.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,501: Reno's fave saying: "Give something back".

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #89: Assumption is the mother of all mistakes.

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,506: John Lithgow played Yoda in the radio production of "The Empire Strikes Back".

Pinky Carruthers' Unknown Fact #8,402: Buckaroo's fave place: "Anywhere that doesn't exist".

Against the World Crime League Audio Novel Review

By Tim “Tim Boo Ba” Munro

Couple of years back I had the chance to speed read an early draft of the Buckaroo Banzai Against the World Crime League Et Al. A Compendium of Evils novel. In the [January 2022 issue of World Watch One](#), I wrote up my thoughts. Take a couple of minutes to read it. I’ll wait. At 621 pages I knew I’d never read the whole book again, but I also had a sneaking feeling that I missed some primo stuff.

I did a happy dance when I saw that there was an [audio version of the book on Audible](#). Even while having it read to you, some of the sections are a slog to get through. I took one for the team and paid attention to the whole enchilada. Now, I’ve got some recommendations.



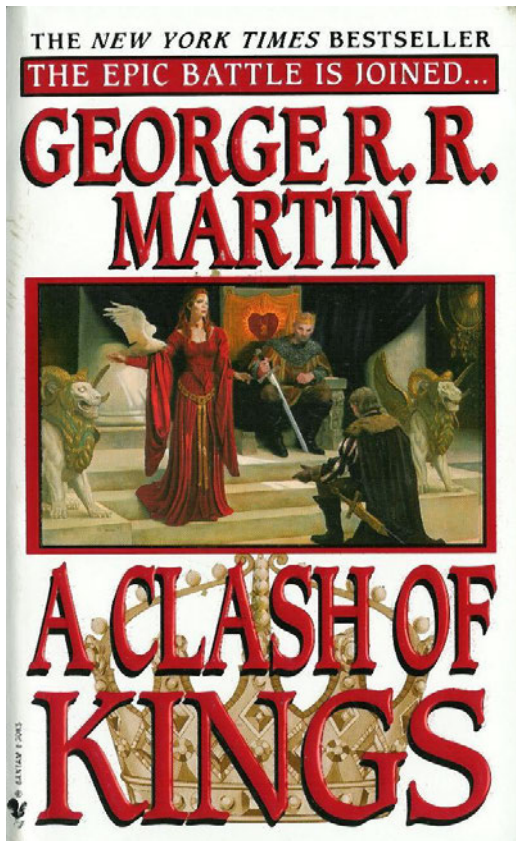
BB:AtWCL by Audible

One problem I had is that author Earl Mac Rauch is like a nuclear genius or something. I don’t get a fraction of his references, but I found somebody who does. Check the [PopApostle website](#) for lots o’ annotations.

I was in the middle of listening to the Game of Thrones books when I switched to BB:AtWCL. I had my speed set to 1.2 for GoT, so that’s where I started with Buckaroo.

Hey, speaking of GoT, in the second book, A Clash of Kings, I listened to this passage, “Behind the Lannisters came their great lords and captains. Their banners flared and flapped, a pageant of color: red ox and golden mountain, purple unicorn and bantam rooster, brindled boar and badger, a silver ferret and a juggler in motley, stars and sunbursts, peacock and panther, chevron and dagger, black hood and blue beetle and green arrow.” Black Hood, Blue Beetle, and Green Arrow are all comic book heroes. George R. R. Martin is such a nerd and I dig that about him.

But I digress...



A Clash of Kings from Bantam Books

Anyway, download the audio version of BB:AtWCL. Pour yourself a glass of your favorite beverage. Sit in front of your computer and pull up the PopApostle's annotations. Listen to narrator [Peter Noble](#) read at a speed of 1.2. Scroll along with the annotations as you listen. It'll make ya feel smart.

Now, here is the most important part; whenever two mentally ill characters are speaking to each other, crank up the speed to 2.5. Get through that crap fast as you can. The stuff in the book you're gonna like are the bits with Buckaroo and the HKCs.

MILD SPOILERS

The mentally ill characters are Hanoi Xan, Wild Bill Waggoner, Whorfin/Lizardo, Whorfin/Costello, and Whorfin/Balthazar. I also recommend speeding through all the Xan and Penny scenes.

I give Peter Noble an A- for his reading. He does a killer job on the various accents of the cast. He loses points 'cause he consistently pronounces "Banzai" with the accent on the second syllable. Sounds weird.

There were a couple of things that changed from the draft I read to the book I listened to. One of my favorite lines, "I've got an idea for a movie" was cut. I LOL'd at that one in context.

Back to Game of Thrones again for a quick sec. In the series, Martin would include sample chapters of the next book as a li'l sneak peek for the fans. Mac Rauch did the same thing in the draft version and included a sample chapter from the upcoming novel, Buckaroo Banzai, Emperor of Earth.



MAJOR SPOILER

In the sample chapter, Buckaroo and the Hong Kong Cavaliers invade Xan's lair with the aid of a swarm of drones. Xan escapes, but Penny is rescued. She and Buckaroo are reunited, and it feels so good. After pages and pages of doom and gloom, this chapter made me feel such feelings. I was talking to an on-line buddy and he said what I felt was "catharsis". I looked that word up and my dude was right! That sample chapter should **not** have been cut.

To review:

- 1) Listen to the book with access to the PopApostle's annotations.
- 2) Speed through all the scenes of crazy people talking to each other and Penny's emotional torture.
- 3) At the end of the story, imagine an extra chapter where Penny is saved. It's cathartic.

You might ask, "Why jump through all these hoops, Tim? Wouldn't it be easier to skip the book?"

Yes. Yes, it would, but then you'd be missing buckets of Buckaroo Banzai lore. You've always loved

Buckaroo Banzai and I don't want you to miss out.



The French poster for Buckaroo Banzai by Laurent Melki has nothing to do with Tim's article, but its shape fills this space nicely.

BUCKAROO BANZAI

EMPEROR OF EARTH

THE NEXT VOLUME IN THE THRILLING SERIES FROM



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Interview with the Art Department's Tom Southwell

By Steve "Rainbow Kitty" Mattsson

Tom Southwell started as a Production Illustrator on films such as *The Muppet Movie*, *Blade Runner*, *Romancing the Stone*, and *The Goonies* before working his way up to Art Director and Production Designer. He finished his career teaching the next generation of filmmakers. He was kind enough to answer our questions about his work on *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Steve Mattsson: So, Tom—how'd you hook up with the *Buckaroo Banzai* Art Department?

Tom Southwell: *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* started for me in an office at the Thalberg Building at MGM. J. Michael Riva, the Production Designer, called and asked me to bring my portfolio and we'd chat about his next film, *Buckaroo Banzai*. Also, at the interview were W.D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch. They had seen *Blade Runner (BR)* and were impressed with the look of the film. They asked a few questions about how we did it. My portfolio had set sketches, storyboards, prop designs, and graphics from many different films I'd worked on. They were particularly interested in *BR*, so I mentioned I had a book of that stuff in my car. They asked to see it. They were very flattering when they saw the

work. I asked about *Buckaroo* and they were serious about getting a specific look for their picture. They wanted strong period symbols with a historical documentary overtone. As it turned out, they were seeing several people from the *BR* Art Department that day and hired a whole bunch of us.



SM: That leads to our next question. What does the Art Department do on a film?

TS: We design the sets, costumes, vehicles, props, locations, graphics, and visual effects. Each of these areas has a leader (principal designer), who takes guidance from the Production Designer, who coordinates the vision coming from the script and the director. Illustrators make sketches or concept drawings after brief meetings with Production Designers or Art Directors. Plans and elevations are drawn by the Set Designers (artists trained in architecture). They create the construction plans.

The construction team, led by a coordinator, builds the sets on stage and alters locations. Plaster and paint artists come next, leaving little time for the Set Decorator and their staff to install the furniture and details they

have been collecting or building elsewhere.

A Production Illustrator can also work with the director to create a visual shot list called a storyboard. This is like a comic book page with every shot planned and notes for camera movements, action direction, and lens changes. Today, these drawings are put into motion in a process called PRE VIZ.

A Prop Master is responsible for every prop an actor touches, consumes, or shoots, as well as live animals on a set.

Ahead of all of this is an area called design research, location scouting/management, and picture cars.

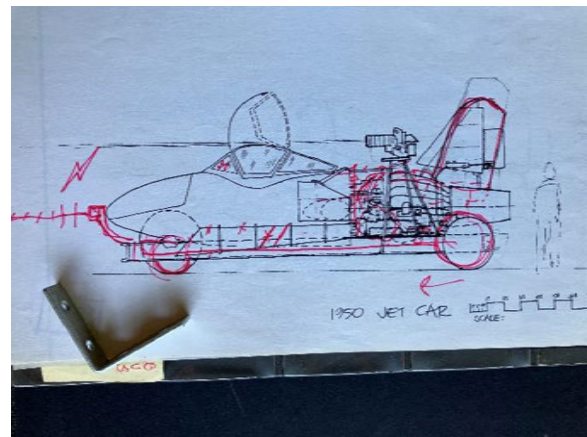
All of these workers are THE ART DEPARTMENT.

SM: **Buckaroo** was early in your career when you were working as a Production Illustrator. Tell us about working with Production Designer J. Michael Riva.

TS: **Buckaroo** was my first film with Mike Riva. We were together on films for over ten years after this one. Mike is actual Hollywood royalty. His father was an art director, his mother an actress, and his grandmother is the world-renowned actress Marlena Dietrich.*

But Mike never acted superior. He had charm and an openness. His face would light up as the vision of the movie came springing from the fragments we created. Mike didn't draw much, but he had a way of expressing himself, which was great for us illustrators. He was so articulate and used rich artistic descriptions. That is likely how he got his jobs. **The Goonies, Golden Child, Scrooged, Lethal Weapon, A Few Good Men, Congo, North, Dave, Radio Flyer, Tango & Cash,** and **The Color Purple** followed **Buckaroo**. He passed during the making of **Django Unchained**.

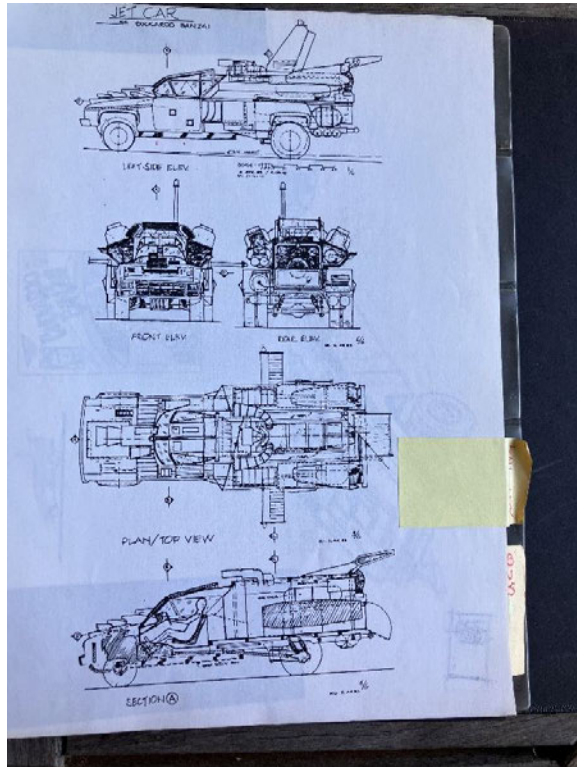
SM: I see a lot of designs, graphics, and drawings of the '50s and '80s Jet Cars in your portfolio. What can you tell us about the design process for these vehicles?



Courtesy of Tom Southwell

TS: The Jet Cars were completely the design of the Art Director, Stephen Dane, who supervised their construction. I was asked to create graphics to be viewed on the

dashboard and on monitors at a control station. I took Stephen's drawings and simplified them into ink graphics for stickers, patches, and such. I don't want to take credit away from Stephen, who also did great vehicle work for **Blade Runner** and **Ghostbusters**.



Courtesy of Tom Southwell

SM: You did a couple of versions of Buckaroo Banzai comic book covers. **Marvel** artist Mike Kaluta used the one you did of Hanoi Xan as the basis for the cover that appeared in the movie. What do you remember about the comic books?

TS: As I recall, the comic book was to be a weekly (like *Time Magazine*) in the fictional world of Buckaroo. It would be aimed at his pop culture

followers who were hungry for anything about what Buck was doing: rock & roll, brain surgery, space/time travel, aliens, or world protection.

SM: That sounds like a cool comic! Any final thoughts before we sign off, Tom?



Courtesy of Tom Southwell

TS: Good luck with your celebration of Buckaroo's 40th Anniversary. I hope I contributed something of interest.

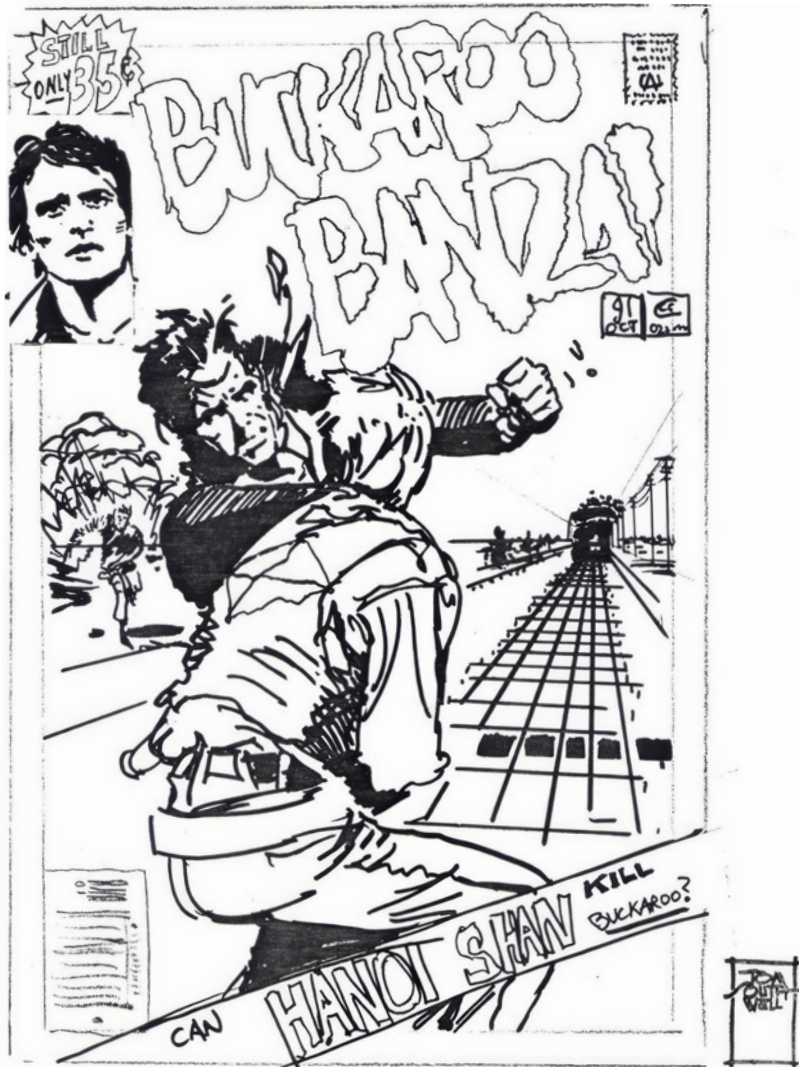
During the filming of **Buckaroo Banzai, Mike Riva was dating Jamie Lee Curtis. As the daughter of Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis, she had her own claim to Hollywood royalty. She ended up playing Buckaroo's mother, but was interested in other roles as well. (See the interview with Pepe Serna in this issue.)*

BACK STORY

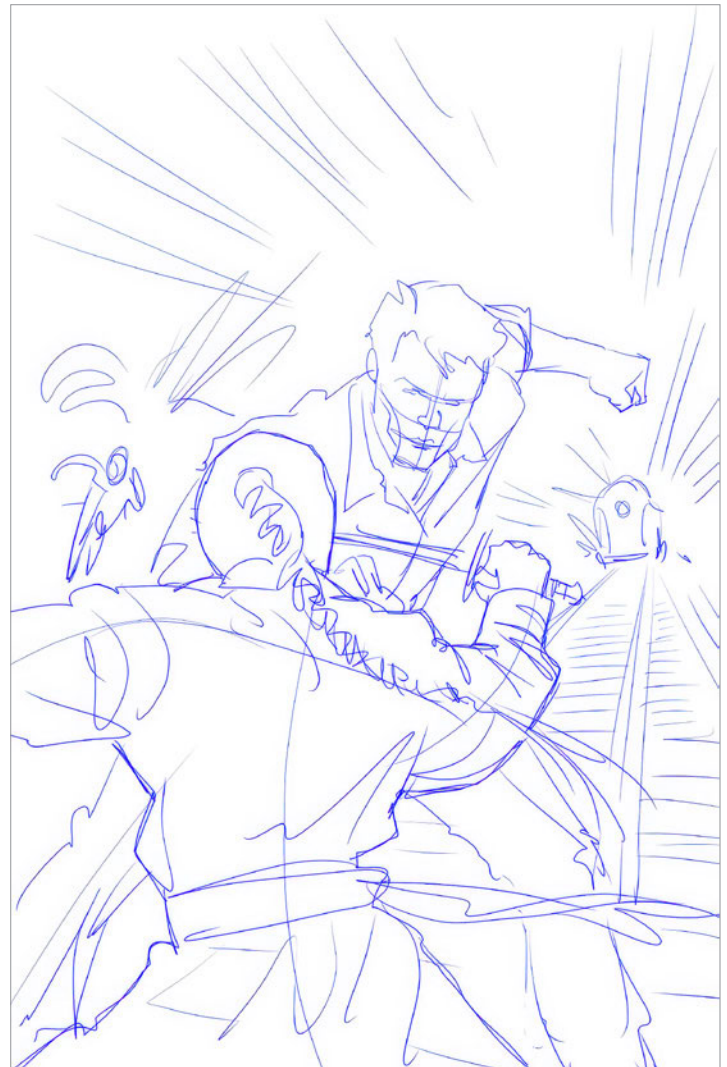
BY WORLD WATCH ONE STAFF

The cover of the prop comic book in *Buckaroo Banzai* was almost very different. Production Illustrator Tom Southwell sketched an idea for a more Buckaroo-focused cover using the Marvel Comics trade dress from 1977. (See the Tom Southwell interview in this issue.) We thought a finished piece based on Tom's alternate sketch would make the perfect companion to Mike

Kaluta's front cover. **Matt Haley** was our first choice to do the finished art. Matt had done the best covers for Moonstone Comics' *Buckaroo Banzai* run and he has been a long-time friend of World Watch One. **Scott Dutton** tweaked and colored his re-created trade dress. All that remains is for you to enjoy.



Southwell's rough was re-composed by Haley to fit his aesthetic.



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